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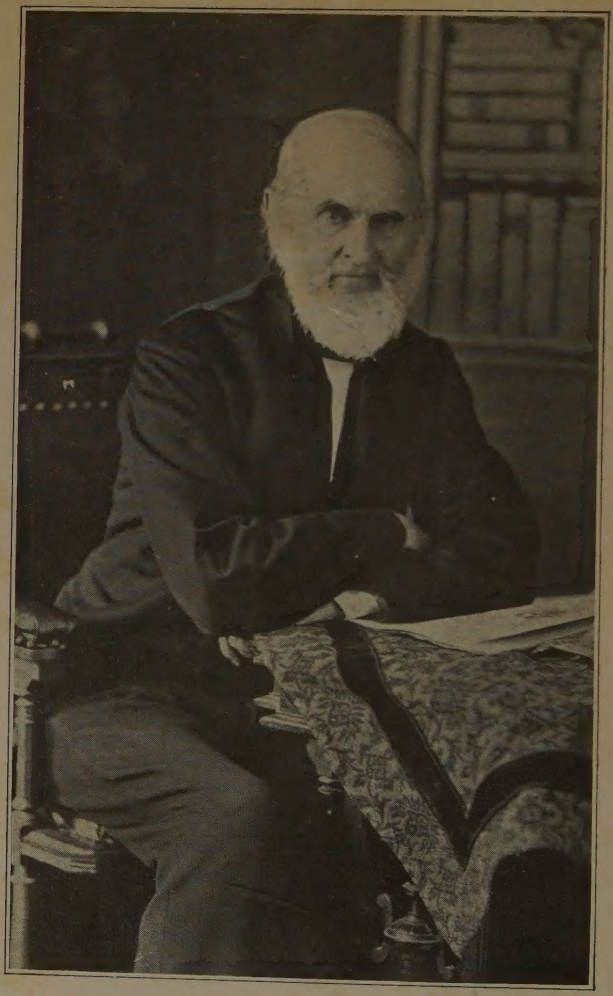
FRANCES CAMPBELL SPARHAWK



John S. Wheeler

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FRANCES CAMPBELL SPARHAWK

*Author of*
*"A Chronicle of Conquest," "Honor Dalton,"*
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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER

F. C. S.

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# FOREWORD

Thanks are due to Messrs. J. B. Lippincott and Company, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, and "The Congregationalist" for the permitted use of articles written for them and now revised with the new material for the book.

"You do, indeed, know a great deal about uncle," wrote Whittier's niece, Mrs. Pickard, to the writer.

In the middle 1830's Whittier with his mother, her sister "Aunt Mercy," and his sister Elizabeth, "our youngest and our dearest" of "Snow Bound" memories, removed from his birthplace in Haverhill to the Amesbury home which grew to be so dear to him.

His townspeople held him in admiration and loving reverence. Some came to his home as honored citizens enter a city made free to them, and learned that his life was poetry no less than his writings.

In 1887 he said in a letter to the writer: "I think often of the old days when thy father was alive and sister Lizzie and we were all together."

As the daughter of his physician and friend, she has given in "Whittier at Close Range" intimate glimpses of his life and character.

FRANCES CAMPBELL SPARHAWK.

Brookline, Massachusetts.

# WHITTIER AT CLOSE RANGE

## I

In the garden room, worthy synonym of a poet's study where blossom flowers of thought and beauty, a young neighbor of the poet awaited his coming.

His easy chair stood with bookshelves on the right hand, whence he could gather from them as he pleased — although books were scattered everywhere over the house — and at its left was the table between the windows looking into the garden, while opposite it stood the door from the little hall, so that the chair faced all who entered the room. She looked across the room at a painting of a California sunset — Starr King's gift to the poet. Near the painting was the engraving of an Arctic scene sent to the poet and his sister Elizabeth by Dr. Kane on his return from his Arctic explorations. She remembered how for a long time the picture had failed to appear, and how when a duplicate had been sent and hung, this first picture had at last arrived, and had been given by Miss Whittier to one of her Amesbury friends.

The poet had banished from the garden room a fine oil painting of himself in his youth, a

striking portrait, full of individuality, yet bearing a suggestion of Burns. But it was not strange that one poet should recall the other, since there was in some respects a marked resemblance in the moods and ideals of the two; while in character and life they were as far asunder as the poles.

When Whittier's poem on "Burns," written "On Receiving a Sprig of Heather in Blossom," was published, his sister Elizabeth wrote to the doctor's wife, "This song of Burns was written partly before, but thy gift of heather bells has given it all its beauty. Nobody knows how much I love the old romance of Scotland, and the name of *heather* or *moorland* always has a charm." Later, the poet himself told the giver — a Scotswoman — of his early falling in with the poems of Burns, and how the Scottish poet had opened his eyes to the beauty of the simplicities of life and our rich possession in these, and how, taught by Burns, Whittier had

> "Matched with Scotland's heathery hills
> The sweetbrier and the clover."

All his life Whittier saw and taught

> "The unsung beauty hid life's common things below."

What compensation to him for the limitations which his life work for the slave and his own delicate health imposed upon him! In proclaiming the slave his brother, Whittier came to perceive his own brotherhood with all men bound in whatever slavery of mind and soul, to see that simplicity and reality were the great forces of life and inspiration in poetry as in all other things. His own early instructions prepared him for Burns' assertion,

"A man's a man for a'that."

And from Burns' most beautiful song Whittier sings,

"With clearer eyes I saw the worth
Of life among the lowly;
The Bible at his cotter's hearth
Has made my own more holy."

These dreams and perceptions made him the poet of New England idyls, as did his spiritual inspiration of her ideals. He looked with anointed eyes upon her woods and fields, her hills and streams and her rocky coast. It was first through Burns and then through his own life that he sang:

"Yet on life's current, he who drifts
Is one with him who rows or sails;
And he who wanders widest lifts
No more of beauty's jealous veils
Than he who from his doorway sees
The miracle of flowers and trees,
Feels the warm Orient in the noonday air
And from cloud minaret hears the sunset
call to prayer!"

He sings the beauty in brooks and fields, the oneness that pervades all nature, and how to the opened eyes,

"From his lone sweetbrier Persian Hafiz smiles,
And Rome's cathedral awe is in his woodland
aisles."

This world of beauty in everyday life Whittier has revealed to those who do not travel; he has opened their eyes to perceive how great are their possessions, not in the far-away, nor in the future, but here and now. Other poets may arouse longings for the unattainable; but Whittier has shown us how the manna of life lies at our own doors waiting for us to gather. Burns with inspired lyre sings of the daisy and the mouse, of the Doon and the Ayr, of men and of his "Highland Mary." Whittier sings of flower and tree and field, of mountain and river, of

men and women. But over all his pictures arches the depth of the sky giving them perspective and illumination. When he sings of the sea,

> "The ocean looketh up to God
> As 'twere a living thing;
> The homage of its waves is given
> In ceaseless worshipping."

And of life's trials,

> "...darkness in the pathway of man's life
> Is but the shadow of God's providence
> By the great Sun of Wisdom cast thereon."

To his ears is attuned the music heard through the silences, how

> "The harp at Nature's advent strung
> Has never ceased to play;
> The songs the stars of morning sung
> Has never died away."

Before his eyes,

> "The green earth sends her incense up;"

and to his vision,

"The mists above the morning rills
Rise white as wings of prayer;"

to him

"The blue sky is the temple's arch."

What poet paints nature with a truer touch than he? To him the universe is one thought of God; to him all Nature is informed, not as by the many gods of Polytheism; but by a reverent Monotheism, by the touch of the All-Father and the response of a sentient world.

"So Nature keeps the reverent frame
With which her years began,
And all her signs and voices shame
The prayerless heart of man."

What artist ever drew with brush a more perfect picture of midsummer heat than Whittier in his prelude to the poem, "Among the Hills":

"The sky is hot and hazy, and the wind
Wing-weary with its long flight from the south,
Unfelt."

Then the sharp call of the locust stabbing "the noon-silence;" the driver asleep on his haycart; the sheep huddled against the shade of the stone-wall; and

"Through the open door
A drowsy smell of flowers — grey heliotrope
And white sweet clover, and shy mignonette —
Comes faintly in, and silent chorus lends
To the pervading symphony of peace."

The eyes of the visitor in the garden room fell upon the couch standing under the sunset view, and she recalled how many famous persons had sat upon it — Emerson, "his Puritanic face with more than Eastern wisdom lit;" and Bayard Taylor; for she knew of his long and intimate friendship with the poet and his sister, a friendship terminating only with death — if, indeed, Whittier's friendships have ever terminated; for he seemed to reflect the eternity of Heaven in a heart that never forgot to love. And Sumner had been there — Sumner who with every gift that men prize had turned aside from them all to fight the battle of the slave — "has he not graced my home with beauty all his own?" sang the poet. And many more than these. "What loved ones enter and depart," recorded Whittier.

The books at hand; the desk beside the long window looking out upon the veranda were evidences of Whittier's life work and preparation to meet scholar and statesman upon their own grounds.

Near the desk stood the hospitable-throated Franklin stove. What wit and wisdom glowed in the light of its winter fires! And what wonderful closet was that in the garden room. Here the poet kept his wood — and much else besides! For, from it would he come forth armed with his logs and with the wizard-like power to read the thoughts of his companion! And this skill he proved as he sat before the fire and talked in fun or in earnest, often alternating in mood, but always illuminating the subjects he talked upon.

And in the summer days what a background the blackness of the open stove made for the flower treasures which the poet brought from his walks! Then, suddenly, the visitor wondered why there were no flowers upon the hearth that August day?

But even with the thought, the poet came into the room with his arms filled with flowers.

## II

As he showed them to her, she touched a spray of the goldenrod. "The signal of autumn — Dame Nature's first grey hair," she said.

"Thee 's about right there," he answered. "And what does thee call that?" And his deft fingers singled out another flower.

"The pale aster in the brook," she quoted.

He laughed, and went out of the room to put the flowers into water, but not before she had commented upon the splendid cardinal flowers scattered among the asters, and the brilliant sumach leaves and spikes which made a background in the gorgeous mass of color.

Whittier's poems are rich in descriptions of flowers, and he sang of them as only one who loved them could do:

"For ages on our river borders,
These tassels in their tawny bloom,
And willowy studs of downy silver,
Have prophesied of Spring to come,"

he says of the beloved pussy-willows which open the floral ball of the year among the wild flowers of New England. For the trailing arbutus, our

exquisite mayflower, "tinted like a shell," he has many a word. And he knows the flowers, all of them, from the bloom of the "summer roses," to where in the August heat,

"Heavy with sunshine droops the golden-rod,
And the red pennons of the cardinal flowers
Hang motionless upon their upright staves;"

to the late autumn where,

"...on a ground of sombre fir,
And azure-studded juniper,
The silver birch its buds of purple shows,
And scarlet berries tell where bloomed the
sweet wild-rose!"

And again to the very latest blossom,

"Last of their floral sisterhood,
The hazel's yellow blossoms shine,
The tawny gold of Afric's mine!"

So, throughout the year bloom and brightness, fragrance and beauty find their records in the songs of the poet. "What airs outblown from ferny dells!" he exclaims in his "Last Walk in Autumn" where he treads as if a painter's brush were in his hand, bringing to the reader's eye

"winter's dazzling morns" and "sunset lights" and "moonlit snows," to atone for the loss of summer bloom and greenness.

Whittier took great pride in the beauty and diversity of the flora of his own Essex County; he used to say that it was the richest and most varied of the region. He wrote more than one poem to celebrate autumn festivals in his own town.

In his walks with his sister in her later years, as he writes of her, "too frail and weak" to go herself in search of the flowers she longed for, he would make her rest upon a rock or grassy bank and alone would search for the treasures of wood and field of which both were so fond.

One day when returning from Boston to Amesbury he met a young friend of his on the train. As the two were talking together, a boy selling water lilies passed through the car. The poet bought a bunch of them and gave to his companion. As they sat looking at the exquisite flowers, he said to her: "Thee 'd hardly think that the same Hand that made those made snakes."

That August day while the flowers glowed in the throat of the Franklin stove, converting blackness into splendor, the poet sat in his arm-

chair telling his visitor somewhat of the book into which she had peeped while waiting for him; telling her also of other books, and of people and things.

In the talk and laughter that followed he spoke of Dickens, of whose writings the poet was very fond, declaring that he was never so restless, or so troubled over politics, or so blue about himself, or the weather, that he could not have a good laugh over "Pickwick."

As the poet sat that day beside his books, with the light from the window falling upon him, he looked, as he was, a man among ten thousand. Tall, erect, as he was even to the last, full of the nervous energy that found ready expression in glance and gesture, his head a remarkable height from ear to crown, domelike, built for brains and spiritual power; his eyes radiant at times with the fire of his soul and having the rare capacity both to absorb and to express everything; his heavy eyebrows delighting in swift accompaniments to the humorous twists of his mouth as he told a droll story, or in pain or in moods of despondency dropped down to conceal the eyes that all too plainly revealed how things were in the soul. His whole look was alert, as that of a man whom the last new thing can never surprise.

After a time the poet searched the table for a book he had left there. His visitor explained that a neighbor had come in and borrowed it. "She said you had so many books, you wouldn't miss it," added the speaker.

Down came Whittier's hand upon his knee in the fashion so well known to his intimates; for his hands might have been called almost another feature, such emphasis did they give to his expression.

"I was in the midst of reading it myself," he retorted. "I wish she had taken something else to amuse her; she won't care for it; I could have helped her out better in a book. But she is satisfied." And his infectious laugh was echoed by his hearer.

For Whittier never forgot how precious books had been to him in his childhood and early youth; and how he had hungered for them. And now that he had them in abundance, he so gladly shared them with his friends that these had the habit of coming in and, if he happened to be away, of helping themselves to whatever they wanted to borrow; so that the poet would often search about for a book that he himself wished to lend and, not finding it, would remark resignedly that he guessed somebody had come in and taken it.

How natural and true was his life — that simple life so much praised at present, and so little lived! How unfettered by ceremony and the impedimenta of pomp was the genius which awoke the country by its ringing songs of freedom, and at the same time with a skill and statesmanship which the best politicians acknowledged and were glad to profit by, helped to build up the great party which destroyed slavery, saved the Union, and in spite of its grievous later faults, may well be proud of its record and its continued accomplishments.

How simple was the home in which so much that was grand and permanent was accomplished! For in the garden room great plans were formulated — yes, and the spirit to execute them inspired — great poems were sung, and there were born great thoughts that have helped to move the world onward and Heavenward. How ready was the many-sided Whittier to welcome all phases of human nature but the evil, and in his abhorrence of evil still to pity the evildoers! His neighbors and friends never forgot that he was a great man, with power that had a long arm and fame that reached across the water — a longer distance then than today.

But how could they help confiding their homely cares and difficulties to one so sym-

pathetic and so wise? And how could they help coming to his home as one honored enters a city the freedom of which has been bestowed upon him?

It was in the garden room that the home life of the poet centered; and here his friends from a distance and the neighbors who were also friends sought him. In his chair by the window, or in winter beside the open fire, he was wont to entertain his guests; and only those who were thus entertained know how rich was the feast of thought and soul spread for even the least worthy of them.

His humor so seldom caught in his writings by reason of the many and deeper powers in him, here glowed in his thoughts and flashed up in his words warming and cheering his atmosphere as the open fire of which he was so fond warmed and brightened the garden room. And, indeed, it seems as if there must have been a subtle sympathy between the two forces. For the poet was never keener or more racy than when, having thrown on fresh wood, he knelt on one knee, adjusted the sticks, watched the flames dart out and catch the new fuel, and then suddenly turned his head with that birdlike motion of his and made some remark to his visitor, often, as has been said, catching the latter's very thought.

## III

As a poet should sing of his home, Whittier sang the beauties of the scenery in and around the town in which he lived, its walks and drives giving views of hilltop and lake, of stream and ocean.

Amesbury is set among the hills, Powow Hill at its back and the swift stream of the same name running from the foot of this hill through the town and going on to join the Merrimac. Amesbury is a border town — the only town of this name in the whole country, this and its neighbor Salisbury being called from the famous Almesbury and its adjacent Salisbury in England. Amesbury with the beautiful Merrimac River on its south, has on its north the rounded summits which make New Hampshire from its very beginning the land of hills. It was one of the earliest settled towns in America, receiving its name in 1667, and electing its board of "Prudenshall" the following year. From earliest times, Whittier's own family figured largely in the annals of this region, Whittier Hill in Amesbury having been named from one of his ancestors. It was impossible that Whittier should not have deep interest in its history and legends, and in its people among whom he had intimate and dear friends.

With the poet's keen eye for beauty he saw

"the winding Powow fold
The green hill in its belt of gold."

He pictures on the banks of the Powow old "Cobbler Keezar" beholding through his magic lapstone the river, then

"Woodsy and wild and lonesome,"

changed to the day when the mighty forest was "broken by many a steepled town."

A stone's throw from Whittier's grave still stands the house of "Goodman Macey," the hero of the poem, "The Exiles," which tells his story. The haunted house in the poem, "The New Wife and the Old," is still pointed out in Hampton, although recently it has been removed to another site, restored and inhabited by other than ghosts. "Margaret Smith's Journal," in his prose writings, takes the reader through the woods of Newbury giving many a picturesque incident of the life of the times — and many a touching one. "The Double-Headed Snake" is a legend of Newbury; "The Bridal of Pennacook" sketches the upper portions of the Merrimac; "The Swan Song of Parson Avery" sends its singer from the Newbury shores out beyond the bar and into

the great ocean. In his songs the poet carries us along the Salisbury shore of the river to the Chain Bridge which crosses it at Deer Island, the home of Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford, his contemporary, herself novelist and poet; thence up the Newbury shore to that poem of streamlets, the Artichoke, which slipping beneath the overhanging boughs of trees that all but meet across it, goes through the old mill race — Curson's Mill — to join the Merrimac.

Beyond the woods and the two rivers lies the ocean. "The Tent on the Beach" describes the long stretch of Salisbury before its invasion, first by shanties and then by hotels and casinos and cottages, transformed its picturesque solitudes. But nothing can make less magnificent the long roll of the incoming surf along its six miles of almost unbroken reach of sands.

In one of his letters Whittier says:

"The country about here never looked so beautiful as now. We went to Salisbury pine woods yesterday after meeting. I never saw such perfect and glorious effects of light and shadow — such perfection of green earth and blue sky — such grottoes and labyrinths of verdure, barred at the entrance by solid beams of sunlight, like golden gates. At such times I wish I were a painter."

In this same letter the poet gives a touch of home life. "We had a pleasant visit from Lucy Larcom last week," he writes. "Brother Frank was here on sixth day on his way from Boston — will be back tomorrow or next day. We have had the famous Moncure Conway here. He came over last week with the Cursons."

"The Cursons" were two interesting sisters of fine New England ancestry. The sisters with their mother lived at Curson's Mills where the fairy Artichoke flows to meet the Merrimac. It was to these sisters Whittier's "Lines after a Summer's Day's Excursion" were written:

"Thanks for your graceful oars, which broke
The morning dreams of Artichoke
Along his wooded shore!

Varied as varying Nature's ways,
Sprites of the river, woodland fays,
Or mountain nymphs, ye seem."

In "Snow Bound" Whittier speaks to his brother as being the only one of that family group left beside himself. The tie between the brothers was very close. Many times the poet's letters refer to this brother, enjoying him in health, watching over him when ill, and following him with fadeless love when Franklin passed on before him.

A relative of the Whittiers and at one time in the poet's family has spoken to the writer of the brightness and wit of Franklin, himself also a writer although under an assumed name, and of the brilliant conversation of the two men as they sat together in the garden room, their reminiscences and familiar talk interrupted by peals of laughter. For the poet who showed chiefly his grave side to the world had in him a rich vein of humor — and his friends and neighbors knew that it never gave out through want of being worked! Franklin's daughter, her aunt's namesake, lived with the poet from early girlhood until her marriage.

How Whittier loved all that region! But most of all, he sings of the Merrimac — river worthy of his songs! — of the Merrimac bordering the town of his birth and of his later home, the river of which he says "never was it by its valley-born forgotten." With what delight he pictures its loveliness from its source among "Winnepesaukee's hundred isles, through the green repose of Plymouth meadows, the gleam and ripple of Campton rills," to where it flows, "green-tufted, oak-shaded by Amoskeag's fall," and adown its gleaming miles to "Salisbury's beach of shining sand."

Whittier's Indian poems, except "Mogg Megone" and "Pentucket," breathe that note of sadness for the defeated and sorrowing which he always felt and which his spirit will feel until such defeat and sorrow are wiped out of the world — the very spirit of his writings and of his life.

"Still thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison."

To his faith the message of the Spirit is sent everywhere and its

"...tongues of fire
On dusty tribes and twilight centuries sit."

Mrs. Spofford in a delightful sketch of the poet tells how in the stirring events of the early days of the seventeenth century, in the midst of the bitter strife between the red man and the white, the Whittiers lived in the calm and safety of their own peaceful Quaker faith. They were as was William Penn to the red man. Indian attacks, Indian massacres, white women and children fleeing to the fort for their lives, white men with the rifles mowing down red savages — as the red savages whenever they could find or make opportunity tomahawked and scalped in hate the white intruders — the

Whittier household had no part in these horrors; these were crimes they neither perpetrated nor suffered from. Their door was always on the latch; no gun was ever behind it, or in the hands of its men. The Indians entered and departed at will, always to meet with kindness and never to return this by injury, quick to distinguish between friend and foe, and ready to return kindness with confidence. For that household there were no wild terrors, no midnight massacres.

This fact, while it gives to the character the courage and faith in God and man shown by the Whittier ancestry as Friends, also, it should be remembered, speaks significantly for the appreciation of these traits by the "noble red man." Many times the Indian has shown that he was capable of response to confidence in him and the appeal to his sense of honor.

At one time the poet was applied to for a fitting name for a house recently built in the region of Kenoza Lake on the outskirts of Haverhill. He answered the friends who forwarded the request:

"I have looked over Roger Williams' 'Key to the Indian Language,' and find nothing that seems quite to answer Mr. S——'s purpose.

'Yokomish — I lodge here.

Nowekin — I dwell here.
Wotomuck — At Home.
Washowanan — Hawk or Hawk's Place.
Wussokat — Walnut Trees.'

Most of the names are very long and hard to pronounce. How would the name of the great Sachem, or Chief, on the Merrimac River and whose father owned the whole valley, do for the place? It is a pleasant, well-sounding name and wouldn't be inappropriate; for the Sachem who bore it doubtless had wandered through the woods and fished in the lakes between which the house stands — Wolanset. He was the son of Passaconaway, the mightiest Indian chief in the Northern section of New England and who always made his home on the banks of the Merrimac. Both were friends of the whites and all the associations of their names are pleasant."

## IV

To Whittier, a Friend, a man of peace, the Civil War with its sufferings, its horrors, its changing fortunes, and for those days its vast sacrifice of life was a continual torture. Yet he realized its significance. From the firing of the first gun at Sumter he perceived that the war was destined to sweep from the land the crime of slavery. His inspired poem, "Laus Deo," declares what that meant to him.

Being a Quaker, the poet was, of course, never present at war meetings.

But when during the war contributions were sent from Amesbury, as from other towns, to the front, Whittier was always greatly interested. He knew when boxes went to the soldiers, and he was often well posted as to the contents of these boxes.

And upon one occasion, at least, he was memorably on hand — to some regretfully so — when the townspeople were raising subscriptions for the Sanitary Commission and for the soldiers. Patriotism was at a low ebb that day, for the subscriptions lagged persistently, so that when it came time for the

meeting to break up, the needed amount had not been raised, and things looked as if it would not be forthcoming.

Then the authority which the poet as a man of affairs never failed to put forth at need came to the front.

Whittier rose.

He wasted no strength in appeal to a patriotism overswept by avarice; but made his demands upon that avarice itself.

"If this sum needed," he said, naming it, "is not raised by this meeting, I shall write to Salmon Chase [Secretary of the Treasury] to have your exemption money on the next draft of men put up to seven hundred dollars instead of three hundred, as it is now."

That was all.

But it was enough. His audience looked at the speaker's tall, erect figure, his flashing eyes, his resolute mouth — and decided not to take the risk. The required amount was immediately forthcoming.

All the world knows how in the poet's early days he put aside the ambitions of youth and genius — ambitions which the early call of the world to him proved would have been richly fulfilled — and fought the hard battle for the slave, and endured its contumely.

His own words tell the story. In his poem, "Lines Written in the Book of a Friend," he sings of himself:

"Founts gushed beside my pilgrim way,
Cool shadows on the greensward lay,
Flowers swung upon the bending spray.

"In vain! — nor dream, nor rest, nor pause
Remain for him who round him draws
The battered mail of Freedom's cause.

"With soul and strength, with heart and hand,
I turned to Freedom's struggling band, —
To the sad Helots of our land."

Here was that self-denial, that experience of longings unfulfilled — through the fulfillment of higher longings — which gave him his depth and power of sympathy in every loss and suffering of others, and courage in the sufferings of his own life, and which ripened and sweetened his nature.

Whittier's prominence in the anti-slavery conflict is, of course, matter of history. His influence in politics was great; for he had the keenness of insight, the broad vision of the statesman, and the politician's skill in manipulation which never deteriorated into political

trickery in a heart that loved his fellowmen and a soul that abhorred self-seeking. One day in a package of books that went from his home to the doctor's house, there was slipped in by accident a bit of paper on which were the two following lines in the poet's handwriting, but unsigned:

"That lowest form of worship known
Which incense burns to self alone."

The identical lines are not found in any of his poems and were probably altered. But their spirit is ever with him. Mrs. Claflin in her interesting sketch of the poet says:

"Mr. Whittier was a keen observer of all public affairs and the trusted adviser of many of the most eminent men of the Old Bay State. He seemed to have prophetic vision and was one of the most sagacious counselors in the State then famous for its able men."

## V

In the January of 1864 Whittier wrote to M—— C——, a dear Amesbury friend, who was spending a few weeks at Norfolk under the protection of the Union army and doing some work for the soldiers there.

"Thy letter from Norfolk," he says, "has just reached us, and we [his sister Elizabeth and himself] enjoyed 'its graphic description of your present locality and prospects. . . . The weather here is cold again. . . . Elizabeth is much as usual, unable to write much, so I hold the pen for her. We had a pleasant visit from Bayard Taylor last week. Night before last he sent us a picture he painted in 1857 on the shore of the Arctic Ocean. It is a view of the little church of Vadso, the northernmost Russian settlement. . . . Who knows but that thee may enter Richmond with the victorious army! Stranger things have happened."

A penciled line from Elizabeth on the same sheet says:

"M——dear, a thousand thanks for thy pictures of 'Virginia life' — I look from thy window on the sunken masts of the poor brave Cumberland. I am so glad you are there. We all are. Tell Colonel F—— [a young Prussian who at the

beginning of the war had enlisted]" the doctor and his wife quite forgive his not coming to Amesbury; the doctor hopes — the fatigue of going well over — the Colonel will grow stronger; he seems to feel he had worked too hard. . . . It was delightful to see our dear old friend Bayard. He will bring his beautiful German wife here before long. . . . How I wish I could unroof that Norfolk house and see you all; the graceful young adjutant pleases me. Tell Col. F—— I never wondered he could not find time to write. I only wonder he is alive. . . . It is so good to hear from thee. Keep well — and come home soon."

To the Col. F—— (afterward General) then at the front the poet wrote:

"We watch with ever wakeful interest the progress of the wár. Sometimes we feel discouraged; but the good God sees and knows all and His time is best. . . . My sister [Elizabeth], Miss B—— [who, later Col. F—— married], and Dr. S—— and family desire to be kindly remembered to thee."

The mention of Bayard Taylor in these letters recalls Whittier's poem, "Bayard Taylor," in which the poet refers to this visit:

" 'And where now, Bayard, will thy footsteps
tend?'

My sister asked our guest one winter's day.
Smiling, he answered in the Friends' sweet way
Common to both: 'Wherever thou shalt send.'

What wouldst thou have me see for thee?' She laughed,
Her dark eyes dancing in the wood-fire's glow;
'Loffoden isles, the Kilpis, and the low
Unsetting sun on Finmark's fishing craft.' "

With abounding faith in the ultimate triumph of right, the poet yet had all the dread of disaster incident to so sensitive an organization. At the defeat at Bull Run he was prostrated.

It is in the major and the minor of his sufferings and his trust that his songs, "In War Time," were sung. "Luther's Hymn," the sombreness of "The Watchers," the depth of prayer in "Thy Will Be Done" — all show the struggle and sorrow of his spirit. But hope speaks in "The Battle Autumn of 1862," where he sings:

"Oh, give to us in times like these,
The vision of her eyes;
And make her fields and fruited trees
Our golden prophecies!

"Oh, give to us her finer ear!
Above this stormy din,
We, too, would hear the bells of cheer
Ring peace and freedom in."

His "Port Royal" is a burst of joy and triumph, with the song of the freedmen in the minor key, so far are they yet from the reality of thefreedom which they have in name. In "Barbara Frietchie" we have not only an inspiring ballad which has flown the wide world over; but we have also a touch of the nobler nature of the South epitomized in the order of Stonewall Jackson; and the poem, in trend if not in speech, is a prophecy of returning loyalty, a prophecy of the day when — not by force, but through love of them — the stars and stripes were to float over North and South alike.

One day during the Civil War, when the poet was at her house, the doctor's wife said to him:

"Mr. Whittier, what did you mean when you wrote that poem, 'What of the Day'? You wrote it in 1857, four years before the war. It's a perfect prophecy of the present time. You remember, it begins:

'A sound of tumult troubles all the air.'

What did you mean by it?" she repeated.

"I don't know myself what I meant by it," he answered her as earnestly as she had spoken; and his look finished what more he would have added — that the poem was, indeed, an inspiration, a real prophecy.

Thus, to the poet who sang a "higher wisdom," who lived a holier life than words alone of any creed can enjoin, to him in the world's imperative need of holiness to endure and of inspiration to conquer in the stress and strain of the life of today we turn for glimpses of his inspiration.

## VI

Whittier was born into love of right and freedom and the atmosphere of his home fostered this.

Even in speaking the words, "My mother," his very tone changed to loving reverence. No doubt he owed much to her in the help and inspiration which great men so often owe to their mothers. Yet it was for what she embodied in herself, even more than what she was to him, that he reverenced her. She was a strong, high-souled woman, thoughtful and full of the ability and resources which the training of the Friends develops so remarkably in their woman. None of the broad questions which interested her son were too great for her. On the contrary, the life of devotion to the freedom of the slave which Whittier and his sister Elizabeth lived, had been born with them and preached into their ears and laid upon their hearts from their childhood. It was not Mrs. Whittier who followed their lead for companionship with them; it was they who took up the service to which she desired and prayed to have them consecrated.

"I shall not live to see the slaves made free," said the poet's mother one day to a friend.

Then she added confidently, "But my children will."

Was this prophecy the result of her faith in the inevitable triumph of righteousness and a guess so shrewd as to seem intuition concerning the causes at work to bring about this consummation speedily? Or did this devout Quaker speak the promptings of the Spirit when she uttered a prediction which at the time seemed so little likely to be fulfilled?

Yet it was fulfilled. Mrs. Whittier died in 1857. Her oldest daughter also died before the prophecy came to pass. But her two sons lived to rejoice in it; and Elizabeth, described in "Snow Bound" as "our youngest and our dearest," her brother's close comrade in intellectual and loving fellowship, died in the September of 1864, so that she lived beyond the day of the Emancipation Proclamation and saw its fulfillment in the triumph of the Union armies.

On the death of her mother, Elizabeth wrote of her to M—— C——, an intimate Amesbury friend absent at the time:

"Our dear mother was so unselfish and good, so pitiful and forbearing, so ready and hopeful. . . . I was not half thankful enough for such a mother. She was growing more and more

beautiful in her life each day. Very dear and lovely is her memory. We cannot doubt she has found the peace and rest that hath an everlasting continuance. I long for faith. I do indeed believe and try to look up for help in my unbelief. But for such a life and close as hers how dare I ever hope? I desire to trust in the sweet, childlike way I remember in her."

At the time of Mrs. Whittier's death, she with the poet and his sister Elizabeth was in the Amesbury home which had been bought after the sale of the farm and homestead in Haverhill, the birthplace of all her children. This Amesbury home was a small dwelling on Friend Street, named from the fact that it led past the Friends' meeting-house not far from this new home. Whittier's biographer tells how the poet planned the new meeting-house which stands further up the street and faces a small common, with a by-road winding down on its other side behind the village, as it then was, and leading on to the old burying-ground where the poet now lies.

In such simplicity of life and holiness of purpose must be invigorating power. No home of luxury and self-indulgence could have produced a Whittier.

## VII

Whittier's biography mentions the encouragement given to his earliest attempts at literature and the prospect thus held out to him of fame and competence in comparative youth; of his congenial work in Boston and his opportunities there for study and research.

But in the garden room by his own fireside the poet one day told the writer of an early experience given later in his biography. To his astonishment he had been called upon by George D. Prentice, then editor of the "New England Review," to take charge of this magazine during Prentice's temporary absence. Whittier's secret tremors had not caused him an instant's hesitation in accepting the position; and as the phrase goes, he soon "caught on."

But before long there came a malignant attack upon one of his editorials, an anti-slavery article called forth by some incident of the day; and no doubt Whittier had struck out from the shoulder, as was his habit in fighting against wrong. The poet in his youth and inexperience was overwhelmed by the virulence of the attack and wondered at first if he should not take the writer's scornful advice and "go back to the farm." But he did no such thing; he braced himself and

"made good." Telling the story that day in the garden room with the world singing his praises, he added that he did not know what had become of that critic. But this remark was far from wishing to emphasize his own eminent position; there was not an iota of boast in Whittier; it was made as a significant encouragement to his youthful companion who, as he knew, had felt the sting of literary rebuffs.

It was not in literature alone, however, that the spirit moved him to say and do the kind thing. A short time after the Civil War his friend, Dr. S—, who had been long trying to secure a pension for a soldier's widow, very poor, at last appealed to the poet to help him. Whittier sent the following letter:

"Amesbury, 26, 10th mo., 1867 (or 69)

"Dear General:

Our excellent friend General F—— goes to Boston today with reference to the pension of Mrs. D—— of this town whose husband lost his life in the service of his country. It is a very urgent case and there has been some difficulty in obtaining the needed papers; but I hope if it is in thy power, thee will aid him in his object.

Very truly thy friend,

John G. Whittier."

The pension was secured.

The world knows well many of the poet's rare and gracious qualities. But the life that Whittier lived in his own family and among his neighbors, the traits that came out in this daily life — these are not known to the world, and never can be, except by lightest sketches. Yet of all his poems the most beautiful was his life.

It was in 1869 that he wrote the following characteristic note to Dr. S——, the "doctor" of these pages:

"Dear Doctor:

There is to be what they call a surprise party at Mrs. C——'s this evening — the anniversary of her marriage forty years ago. They would like to see thee and Mrs. S——, I am sure. It was got up by some of her friends and relatives."

The poet does not mention that he himself was one of the "friends" most active in this endeavor to help a neighbor to tide over one of those hard places plentifully scattered throughout her life. Her home was across the little side street from Mr. Whittier's. She had always been a friend and many times a nurse to his sister Elizabeth. For in those days when trained nurses were rare in the country, she often went into families to nurse in illness. She had

been much in the poet's home in his anxiety, his sorrow, and his own times of straitened means.

Her early opportunities of education had been small, and yet the terms on which she lived with the Whittier family were in themselves an education. Whittier appreciated her love of books, and it is to her advice that the world owes a beautiful poem. One day when she was in the house he came out of the garden room with a volume of "Mrs. Jamieson" in his hand, and reading this neighbor in whose literary judgment he believed, that writer's account of the origin of the stars and stripes, he remarked that it would be a good subject for a poem.

"Indeed, it would; and you are just the one to write it," retorted his listener with spirit. "Why don't you do it?"

The poet returned to his room. And we have "The Mantle of St. John de Matha."

Years afterward when poverty and illness had become intimates of hers, from her bed of pain which was henceforth to know only respite and not cure, she epitomized in a sentence the poet's character. Looking up into the face of the writer who standing beside her had been speaking of him, she exclaimed:

"Oh — Mr. Whittier!" Her voice choked, her face lighted, her eyes filled with tears. She

saw the past with its many trials and sufferings, and to relieve these whenever possible, that blessed presence whose visits to her in her need had not been in one respect as is wrongly said of the angels — "few and far between." In a moment she added brokenly, "When you need *him*, you never have to say, 'Come!' he's always there!"

He was "always there" for any need of any one that he could meet, and he could meet many and diverse needs. For his was his Master's definition of his neighbor. There was nothing in the range of human experience to which he did not accord open-hearted sympathy — except meanness of motive and falsity of any kind. Yet mixed with hatred of the sin was always compassion for the sinner; for no empty words to him were these:

> "And hope for all the language is,
> That He remembereth we are dust."

## VIII

It was not Whittier's habit to say in word or manner,

> "Vex not the poet's mind
> With thy shallow wit."

On the contrary, if the wit were shallow this poet was likely to gather amusement from its exhibition, and so reimburse himself for any small outlay of patience. Nor was this all, nor even half. For if the best in persons was small, it was his joy to bring out this best. So he found interest in persons in whom others could see none and sometimes developed in them unexpected possibilities. For more than anything except faith in God, he had faith in men; speaking reverently, he read them Godward — as they were meant to be.

Yet his often silent laugh at men's foibles was hearty; and nothing so amused him as the bewildered expression of one lost in the mazes of a joke. And not seldom he tried his hand at bringing such an expression; for he had an immense enjoyment of credulity.

Two friends of the poet had been invited to his house to tea.

In the garden room with the flashings of the open fire pointing and illustrating his words, Whittier sat entertaining his guests with a fish story — a whale story in which the originator had striven to outdo Jonah. The poet's countenance was as grave as a judge's; his eyes were now dropped as if recalling the points of the story — which lost nothing in their narration — and now fastened upon the faces of his listeners. He found one hearer's eyes dilated and her lips parted in absolute absorption and faith. With unshaken gravity the poet continued, until the voice of his other listener broke in upon the tale with the suggestion that this was really a most remarkable yarn. Like a flash he turned upon her in mock anger. "Thee doubts that, Lucy?" he cried. "Why, a Quaker told me that story." But the spell being broken, he laughed as heartily as the others.

A former resident of Amesbury brought up most strictly, and rigid in adherence to her tenets, was taken out of these grooves and put into an entirely different life in New York City, a life much more liberal in creed and practice. The unwonted freedom delighted her and she came home to visit, full of enthusiasm for her new surroundings. She was welcomed by the poet who liked her well. With

secret note of the new vivacity in look and manner, he asked her with much interest, "And how does thee like New York?"

At the question her enthusiasm burst forth, and she declared with unction that she liked it very, very much.

A sparkle of mischief kindled in the poet's eye. "Thee likes it because it is so wicked," he commented demurely.

But although the poet could laugh at others, never did he put himself in a position to be laughed at. So great was his sensitiveness, that his friends have often heard him say how keenly he felt mistakes of his which he alone had perceived — or perhaps imagined; for he was so resourceful and quick at retort that nobody could succeed in cornering him in an argument or a situation.

When in the days of his later fame he had that well-known meeting with the Emperor of Brazil, where Dom Pedro in the fashion of his country had embraced the poet, the company present after the Emperor's departure began to rally the poet upon this form of greeting. But Whittier turned to his hostess with that gleam of fun in his eyes which his friends knew so well, and retorted, "That was meant for thee!"

Unlike many persons, themselves apt, he enjoyed other people's wit. It was worth a thousand miles' journey to hear him say, "Capital! Capital!" accompanying the words and his laugh with that light blow of his hand upon his knee which was an exclamation point in pantomime. Such a gesture must have come into play when he learned Harriet Livermore's reception of his description of herself in the "not unfeared, half welcome guest" of "Snow Bound." She is said to have retorted, "He always was a saucy boy!"

There never came to him an episode more rich in the humor in which his soul delighted than came through an invitation which he once received.

Sitting on the sofa in the garden room where so many in distinguished walks of life had paid honor to the poet, a young man from a neighboring town, a self-made man — so far as his creation had progressed, and, as the saying is, proud of his maker — discoursed with insistence concerning a Republican Convention to be held in the West, and urged the poet to accompany him there. In vain Whittier opposed his want of strength to meet such a strain, and gave other reasons also. As if the poet had not spoken, the other reiterated

his arguments, and wound up with this climax:

"I know, Mr. Whittier," urged this self-making young person to the man who as one of the founders of the Republican party was held by its leaders in especial honor, "that you are a very shy man and shrink from meeting strangers. But I shall be there to introduce you."

As the poet told of this episode, his eyes shone with fun and his tone had an unction which he would not allow his words to express.

Whittier's delight in fun was to him the sunshine of his many dreary winter days. It is told of him that, in his thirties, he one day walked into the old Rocky Hill school house at Salisbury Point while the school was in session, and to the astonishment of the children and the amusement of the teacher who afterward explained to them that this was John Greenleaf Whittier, he sat himself down on the little low seat in front — the dunce's seat, or the rogue's seat as it was then called — a bench which in his boyhood he could never have occupied.

Who knows that the poem, "In School Days," which he wrote so long afterward did not come into his heart at that time?

## IX

When after Whittier's morning writing at the desk by the French window in the garden room, the desk on which were written "Snow-Bound," "The Tent on the Beach," and other well-loved poems, the poet rested, did he go to the woods, to the fields, to the streams he loved so well? Undoubtedly, he did sometimes. But his walks afield were more frequently afternoon strolls. He lived before the days of the postman. His morning mail was waiting for him at the office, and although sometimes he sent for it, he more frequently went himself, and rested from his poems by neighborly chats. On poetry? Hardly — in the post office, or the grocery store!

He liked the local news of the day; he liked social intercourse — especially when he could jump up from his chair, or his sugar barrel, or wherever he might have been seated and take his departure when he felt so disposed.

But there was more than this. He also had a purpose.

Three years previous to the moving of Whittier's family to Amesbury had been held the Anti-Slavery Convention in Philadelphia, in which Garrison, Whittier, Wright, Samuel J. May,

and so many others whose names are familiar in the cause of freedom for the slave, had taken part.

But Whittier's hopes of more active co-operation had been ended by his delicate health, his want of power to endure the fatigues of such a life as that to which scenes like the Boston mob, the Philadelphia mob, and convention work would have subjected him. Yet he still had work in abundance as Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, as an earnest and most important advocate of that political party which some of the anti-slavery reformers had determined to build up, the principle of which was inserted in the Albany Anti-Slavery Convention of 1839.

Whittier was one of the business committee of this National Convention of Abolitionists in which the formation of a political anti-slavery party was inaugurated. The opinion of the abolitionist, Abraham L. Pennock of Pennsylvania, made in the January of 1840, six months after the Convention, Whittier publicly endorsed the following year as his own opinion also.

"What an absurdity is moral action apart from political," declared both these men who with others determined to use the legitimate weapon of their vote in the cause of freedom —

not as a right only, but a duty, since it was in their hands.

Together with Sumner, Henry Wilson, and many others at the East, Whittier was working toward the growth of a political party, eventually to become one with the great party at the West where Abraham Lincoln's "Lincoln–Stone protest" against the encroachment of the Slave Power had developed into his famous debates with Douglas upon slavery, under the guise of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and other measures. There had arisen in the country many forces which in different ways and places, but with the same object, had come to stand for opposition to the spread of slavery, and were assimilating. Forces moral, spiritual, political were uniting — unconsciously at first — for the great conflict under the leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

To Whittier's insight political measures were to be the salvation of the country he loved and eventual destruction to the slavery he hated. To him therefore each man's vote counted.

While he was in the grocery store, or the post-office, or in some shop, that especial place became by power of the poet's character and purpose the rendezvous of a political force that had for its object the turning of politics

from chicanery and bribery into the might that dwells in an honest man's vote wisely given.

If the poet accepted men as he found them, it was because in them he found good. He never accepted evil in men or passed it by with indifference, but strove in some way to speak the word, or do the act which should turn the man to good. Politics led by Whittier in Amesbury was under that same leadership which by personal counsel as well as by published poem and word was so helpful in organizing the Republican party. None recognized more quickly than did Whittier that men all over the country were like men in Amesbury, no more intelligent, no more honest, no more progressive. And his poems to

> "Rouse the sleeping citizen;
> Summon out the might of men!"

his written pleas for the right and appeals against oppression were made to just such men as those he daily met and talked with.

None knew better than he did that suggestions and inspirations are in the air and hit one in the way of them. Whittier had a quality also accredited to Roosevelt — he went where things were. How he always managed to get there in his life of a recluse it is difficult to

explain, except upon the principle that electricity travels a thousand miles as readily as one, and the poet's perceptions were charged with spiritual electricity.

Therefore these men whom he was daily meeting had something to say to him also, although often unconsciously; and his knowledge of their powers and possibilities, of how they looked at things, and how to reach their hearts gave to his "Songs of Freedom" a note of power that sent them ringing over the land.

As leader and inspirer he stood — not autocrat. He cared to know all men's opinions, and his weapons were argument and persuasion, and that keen rapier of retort which pierced many a false theory.

Yet, as it has been said, in these morning hours politics were not all. The poet had been writing; he needed recreation. Everything that was going on around him was of interest to him; the local story, the fun, the jest, the laugh were not wanting; nor was any situation with the possibility of humor in it lost upon this politician and poet. He appreciated broadcloth, he delighted in cultured phrase, both he could find in his own town. But where these were lacking,

"A man's a man for a' that."

For Whittier lived so much in the realities that he held men as they stood in the ranks of character, and in reading them he was wonderfully keen.

So, he talked and listened and joked and laughed with his fellow-townsmen, and reckoned among them many a true friend.

In a letter to Mrs. F—— written in the November of 1876, he says:

"What does the Colonel think of the election? I staid to vote in Amesbury and have been here for ten days or more. The dismal and misty weather seems to correspond with the doubtful and wearisome political condition of the country. For myself, I would prefer to see Tilden president than to elect Hayes by fraud. Yet there seems a possibility of his fair election."

After giving some Amesbury news to a correspondent, he adds:

"Do thee ever think of our sojourn at the Bearcamp House? I always recall it with pleasure. H—— C—— [a young friend of whom Whittier was fond] is now in Amesbury. He is still, I hope, improving."

## X

Sometimes the poet did not see his friends and acquaintances upon the street, or he was too absorbed in a poem — or, alas it may have been with a headache — to give sign of recognition. Yet to a neighbor who one day laughingly accused him of "cutting" her, he spoke of the two persons whom he never failed to recognize, whatever his preoccupation — one an old cooper, the other an old lame man, both of whom through their poverty found many persons blind to them.

But, again, sometimes Whittier's eyes served him well. One morning coming out of the post-office, he saw the doctor driving past and the two stopped to greet one another. Then, as the interview seemed finished and the doctor was about to drive on again, the poet said in an undertone:

"Don't thee go yet. There's So-and-So," naming a bore, "waiting for me. Let him get by first."

So the poet and the doctor's carriage stood in the road until Mr. "So-and-So" grew tired of waiting and took himself off.

Occasionally, a visitor who happened to be in the garden room when the poet returned

from the post-office was treated to tidbits from his mail. One day he read aloud a letter from a woman of brilliant literary fame and brilliant personality. She announced that she was coming to visit him.

"She is one of the most easily entertained visitors I ever have," he commented, "for I don't have to answer her; I don't get a chance!" And as he laughed, he knew well that, had the writer of the letter heard him, she would have had her retort ready. For when did Gail Hamilton ever fail of a good retort? "Now, what does she send that to an old fellow like me for?" he went on, holding out a snip of her new gown which for his edification she had inclosed in her letter.

She told him also where she was about to visit and added her request for a letter from him, or for a few words, or for merely his name, so that in a moment of abstraction she could draw the envelope from her pocket as by accident, and drop it back again with the remark, "Ah, a letter from Whittier!"

The poet in speaking to a friend about his comprehension of character, told how he sometimes regretted this ability. She responded that at times she also read people better than she liked.

"So do I, Mrs. S——," he answered eagerly. "I read them too well." His sensitive organization which vibrated to the least change in the winds of heaven, vibrated also to human emotions and passions in others.

And yet here his kindness did not fail him; nor when face to face with evil, did he rebuke the evil-doer with any consciousness of superior personal merit. Instead, he appealed from the evil in evidence to the good in reserve.

As when one morning in the garden room he listened to an amazing proposition, namely — that his visitor should write the poetry, which the poet was assured by the speaker the latter could do fluently, and that Whittier should put his name to it, which would make it sell, and that the two should share the profits!

The poet showed no anger at the suggestion of linking his name with doggerel, or contempt for the other's stupendous conceit. It was the deceit which he attacked.

"Thee is a minister of the Gospel," he answered the man. "Now, does thee think it would be right to do a thing like that?"

## XI

Whittier was not one of the philanthropists whose affections are all for the world in general with home left out in the cold. On the contrary, his home affections were very strong; and his thought of his sister Elizabeth in her invalidism was constant, his care and anxiety for her unremitting. Whatever suited Elizabeth best was what he desired; wherever she would be most benefitted was where he wished to go. Although he preferred the mountains, yet for his sister's sake he would go to the seaside; as for his sake she would choose the mountains when the ocean breezes suited her better.

On entering his home after an absence, his first question always was, "Well, Elizabeth, how has thee been since I've been away?"

His publication of her poems and what he says of them prove his estimation of her as a poet. Her judgment, her sympathy, her affection, her criticism, her inspiration were all in all to him.

To the outside world she was a brilliant talker, a cordial hostess, a devoted friend. To her brother she was home itself.

Slender and delicate as Miss Whittier had

always been, she had known in her own person somewhat of the lawlessness and violence invoked against the cause she championed. For she, then a girl of twenty, had been present as a member of the Women's Anti-Slavery Society, in the October of 1835, when the Boston mob surrounded the building in which the meeting was held and attacked Garrison who was to address it.

She was one of the brave women who, two by two, arm in arm, one woman white, one black, the former to protect the latter as far as possible, marched through the mob to the house of Mrs. Chapman, where the adjourned meeting was held, and the officers duly elected.

Devoted, brave, indomitable, resolute in purpose, Elizabeth Whittier's intense interest in all that concerned the freedom of the slave, as well as her great literary ability, made her her brother's companion and co-adjutor. For to Whittier himself this cause was dearest; it was the cause which to his latest day he was more glad and proud to have championed than he was of all the fame his writings had brought him.

Even when Whittier's fame was still identified with a cause which for the time kept him from the wider knowledge of the public,

Elizabeth H. Whittier

many guests were attracted by his name and personality. Not a few of these came from homes of much greater elaboration than the poet's. Elizabeth felt this; yet never in her inmost heart was she untrue to the cause for which the poet had chosen poverty — almost obloquy.

Yet once when guests were coming who lived in a style far beyond the simplicity of the Whittier home, she spoke out her dread of the inward comments which she knew would be made by the strangers.

But her brother had his consolation ready — who ever saw him when he was not ready?

"Why, Elizabeth," the poet made answer, "it's all upholstery. What does thee care for upholstery?"

To one with so little physical strength as Miss Whittier had, the frequent and sudden influx of guests was often a trial.

Never was it more so than when at noon one washing day the stage coach drove up to the house, and, unannounced, two ladies descended from it, the driver following with a trunk which he deposited in the hall and departed. Miss Whittier faced the strangers with the trepidation of a housekeeper who conjures up visions of dust where none should

be and who — still worse — takes counsel with herself concerning the state of the larder. Her welcome of her visitors, although kindly, was not wholly free from embarrassment.

But these were housekeepers also; and they understood, it may be far more than it was desired that they should do. For, the next moment one of them sat down upon her trunk and burst into tears of mortification at their having in this way imposed themselves upon strangers.

With the first tear, however, the distress of their hostess fled. She no longer cared a jot for household disarray — which had been chiefly a matter of her own imagination — and her welcome of her guests was the beginning of a life-long friendship with Alice and Phoebe Cary.

Elizabeth Whittier, this very dainty Quaker lady, was exquisite in her hues of drab when occasion demanded; yet with all her feminine nature she loved the colors most becoming to her dark complexion and hair and her beautiful dark eyes. When the summer sun shone hot, a visitor might find her charmingly, although most simply gowned in a pink cambric, or even a buff one which was quite as much to her taste, her white linen cuffs turned

up over the wristbands and her collar of linen in the fashion of the day.

Yet it was artistic instinct and not vanity which made these selections. For Miss Whittier's estimate of herself was always most humble. She never appreciated her own brilliance of face and conversation and her own great charm of manner. Herself dark, she delighted in fairness of skin and could not picture angels other than blue-eyed and golden-haired.

She was very fond of music, well nigh forbidden to Quakers in those days; and a young neighbor with a very sweet voice would often go to her home and sing to her, to Miss Whittier's great delight. So sensitive to sound was she that voices took shapes to her; they were round, and square, and of different shapes, some of them, no doubt, angular enough!

A little girl visiting relatives in Amesbury went one day with these to the poet's home. She had never seen either the poet or his sister, and Miss Whittier's prominent nose, indicative of her literary taste, but to a child exceedingly pronounced, caught her attention. She stared at it steadily, until Whittier who had been watching her covered her with confusion by saying to her:

"Well, and how does thee like Quaker noses?"

What hospitality, what cordiality in Miss Whittier's way of leading along a guest by the hand given in greeting, until she had placed her in the most comfortable seat!

Like her brother she had that keenness of retort often at once brilliant and yet full of kindly consolation. A young friend came to her one day overwhelmed by the many troubles and sorrows of her lot and in a mood which found life altogether too hard to be borne. Miss Whittier with many a word of sympathy for her griefs said to her at last:

"But what would thee have? Thee would not be an oyster, would thee?"

And before the eyes of her listener there rose in consolation that antithesis of pain, a radiant vision of the joy of life.

A letter from Miss Whittier gives glimpses of the home life and proves her loyalty to home and friends. She writes:

"I was away more than four weeks. It is now nearly four since I came back. No, Mary, Greenleaf has not been out in his old coat and hat hunting asters and gentians. I wish he could. He has been home a few days. He seemed to have had a pleasant tour all about; but for more than a fortnight he has been quite sick, has had a visit from the doctor every day

He seems *somewhat* better now, but has hardly *faith* enough himself. He says the war is waiting while he is ill.

"I have missed thee, Mary, sadly; but I know how delightful it must be in Rehoboth home, so I am patient. Greenleaf has not wanted to see anyone; but I am sure he would be rejoiced to see thee.

"My little journey was *very* pleasant, in Lynn among dear old friends and Aunt Phoebe so glad to have me — and then in Reading, of course, nothing could be better. I think the Reading sunshine and moonlight more wonderful than anything I had known before. I do not feel *quite* as much stronger as I did when I first came home, but am sure it did me good. I was only one day with dear Hattie Sewall at Melrose. . . . M—— dear, if I don't go so much among the glorious woods, I know how beautiful these warm, bright days must be to you, gypsying as you are. I did not go to the Fair, but 'twas all very nice and Lucy Larcom sent me a great bunch of fringed gentians the *day after*. How do you all feel about the war? For my part, I will keep faith in Frémont! What does it all mean — the murmurs against Frémont? . . .

"Only think! Theodore Winthrop's brother has sent me a photograph of Major Winthrop, a

very pure young spiritual face it is — just such a one as I seemed to see in the moonlight on the banks of the Potomac — for thee knows he said, 'It is full moon always at Camp Camison.' I will enclose a notice of thy friend F——'s regiment. I think poor A—— must miss thee. I have seen her once. I love A——, the little I know of her — she is so calm and good. . . .

"The doctor has just taken Greenleaf to ride a little way. The morning is perfect after the storm. I wonder where thee are just now — out in the sunshine, no doubt. . . . The dear little kitten went in a basket to L—— M—— who wrote a note of thanks and welcome to kitty. Greenleaf joins me in love to thee and thy friends. Aunt Dolly sends her love. We shall expect thee by and by. When shall thee look homewards?"

In another letter from Boston to the same friend, Miss Whittier speaks of Fredrika Bremer, who was at that time in America.

"Miss Bremer doesn't seem a great light after all," she says; "she is far more like a good, social hearth-fire making one comfortable. I want you, my dear, good friend, to see her in Amesbury. Tell Annie, Miss Bremer is especially drawn to soft, light curls like hers; they remind her of London. I know she would fall

in love with Annie and her blue eyes. A brother of Mr. J——, the wonderful, drank tea with us on seventh day evening. He looked happy, and we thought he was a good, commonplace body."

Whittier in the note to his poem, "To Fredrika Bremer," writes: "It is proper to say that these lines are the joint impromptu of my sister and myself. They are inserted here as an expression of our admiration of the gifted stranger whom we have since learned to love as a friend."

The poem begins:

"Seeress of the misty Norland,
Daughter of the Vikings bold,
Welcome to the sunny Vineland,
Which thy fathers sought of old."

To this friend to whom Miss Whittier writes so lovingly, the poet also says in a letter:

" I cannot but feel that thou hast greatly over-rated the benefits derived from my society and friendship. In fact, I feel very much as a debtor in these hard times might be supposed to feel if his creditor should take occasion to thank him for his indebtedness. The obligation is on my side rather than thine. To me and mine thou hast been an ever kind and sym-

pathizing friend — one whom we never met without pleasure or parted with without regret. For myself, as for them, *my heart thanks thee.* Thou hast cheered us and helped us in many ways by example as well as words. We have read, thought, hoped, feared, enjoyed, and suffered together and the ties of affection and sympathy so woven from the very tissues of our lives are not easily severed. We miss thee greatly in our little circle; we shall often speak of thee in the dark winter days and long to see thy familiar face in the light of our evening fires.

"What beautiful and serene November days we have had! The weather now grows colder with keen premonitions of winter. W—— has gone to Washington. He started on seventh day morning. I saw the poor fellow off. There was a prophecy of home-sickness in his face as he left. We shall miss him. Banks is governor by twenty-four thousand plurality. The morning after election Elizabeth crowned his picture with thy wreath. Mother sends much love. So does Lizzy [his sister Lizzy]. We shall be glad to hear from thee."

## XII

One day in the garden room Whittier spoke laughingly of some early stories of his that he had recently found when rummaging in the garret. He assured his listener — the writer — that they were not so bad! No persuasion, however, could induce him to show them, or even tell her more about them. But not a few of his poems have a dramatic touch which suggests that had he not been reformer and poet, he would have been famous in romance.

It may have been this faculty of romance which has given to "My Playmate," "In School Days," and several other of his poems touches which might well be construed into a meaning more tender than friendship alone. Another such is "A Valentine," written to this same friend of Elizabeth and of the poet himself, and never published. On the envelope was written in the handwriting of the recipient, "Valentine from J. G. W. — 1849." It reads:

"To M——

Long have I sought and vainly have I yearned
To meet some spirit that could answer mine;
Then chide me not that I so soon have learned
To talk with thine.

Oh, thou wilt cherish what some hearts would spurn;
So gentle and so full of soul thou art,
And shrine my feelings in that holy urn,
Thine own true heart!"

His niece, Lizzie Whittier, afterward Mrs. Pickard, told of the poet's strong home affections. She said that from his early childhood in his games he was always playing at housekeeping; and all his life the ideal of home and the love of it never left his heart.

"A rose-cloud, dimly seen above,
Melting in heaven's blue depths away, —
Oh, sweet, fond dream of human love!
For thee I may not pray,"

he sings in "The Wish of Today."

An Amesbury neighbor, a cousin of "The Countess" of his poem, told the writer of a remark of his. "All the ladies with whom I am associated are in homes different from mine," he had said, it may be speaking especially of the friends of his early days. But she had added that all his life, wherever he had been placed he had been socially among the first.

This same neighbor also repeated the poet's remark to another friend who, too, was related

to the heroine of one of his poems. "In one thing thee have done better than I have," he had said to him — "thee have married a good wife."

The finest comment in Carpenter's book on Whittier is that upon "Benedicite." No other poem so expresses the renunciation of Whittier's life and that purity and holiness of character which made women especially his dear and loving friends.

Once, unknown to the poet, his sister sent to the doctor's home for inspection an exquisite miniature on ivory of a very beautiful woman. MissWhittier's message with the miniature was that this was the portrait of a lady whom the poet had loved, but that she had turned from him and married another. Now, however, in her widowhood and his greater fame she had looked back at him again.

Today's question is, would she have been won had she found in him his old ardor and less resignation? At least she complained to him of the loss of this ardor. His letters assured her that his feelings to her were the same, but that her "fine artistic nature" could not endure the hard, uncongenial influences of his life surroundings. How much had his ardent emotion softened into tender and constant friendship? If his narrow

income at that time forbade him; or if loyalty to his sister would not permit him to put another over the home of which she had been so long the light, who can tell?

This miniature was the portrait of Elizabeth Lloyd to whom the poet's letters have been published. Was she the inspirer of "Benedicite," that poem of a deep and holy love?

When Bayard Taylor was ready to bring to Amesbury "his beautiful German wife" whom the poet's sister had been so eager to see, Miss Whittier was too ill to make the visit possible.

For months she had been growing weaker and more suffering. The doctor sent her to Boston to be in care of Dr. Z——, then a very famous woman physician. During this time Miss Whittier visited Mrs. W——, a sister of Dr. S——.

But in spite of all efforts the disease progressed, and Elizabeth returned to Amesbury worse. From that time she steadily failed, and in the late summer of 1864 she passed to the life beyond.

The doctor's wife who was often in Miss Whittier's room during the latter part of her illness could well have given a touch of the poet's inner life.

One day Elizabeth in a spasm of pain looked up at her brother from this friend who was bending over her.

"Ah, Greenleaf," she said, "I wish thee had a good, strong wife like the doctor's."

"So do I, Elizabeth," he answered her. "But thee knows——"

The finishing of that sentence the hearer never told beyond the limits of her own home.

After Elizabeth's death, in his loneliness and his loyalty to those who had gone, Whittier's heart uttered itself. How could the world help listening to the voice of such a heart as spoke in "Snow Bound?"

When wider fame and money followed the writing of this poem, the poet was full of tender regret that those he loved best were not here to share. One day he spoke to the writer of his increased income and how he wished that he could have given his sisters what they did not have while they were with him. And again, when some strong wind of praise had swept down upon him, he said to one who had known Elizabeth: "If my sister could have lived to see this day, how happy she would have been!"

But he saw "the stars shine through his cypress trees."

To him life broadened more and more. It was given him to learn yet more fully the truth which his labor for the slave had so well prepared him to comprehend. For to him in a deeper sense than ever before those who did God's will and work in the world were united with him, as with his Master, in a spiritual bond.

After the death of Elizabeth the poet's dearest friends hoped that he would marry. He was not a person to whom such a suggestion could be lightly made. Yet one, out of his affection, did hint at this hope.

But Whittier's words shattered the day dream.

"No," he answered, mindful of his frail health. "I have not married a wife. I will not marry a nurse."

## XIII

The poet's well-known fondness for young people was not more marked in later life than in his Amesbury days. There was a group of these young people whom he used to call his "boys and girls," and in whose achievements and successes he felt the greatest interest. His influence over them was not due wholly to that in his character which commanded their admiration, or even to his fun and power of repartee. It came largely from his sympathy with them, his ability to see things from their point of view. And who so well as he brimming over with humor and wit, could enter into and direct their fun? One of this adopted family has recalled when several of them sat in the garden room, each merrily declaring what he or she would do with a fortune, if that would only befall.

"I should put thirty thousand dollars in the bank for John G. Whittier," declared the poet promptly — thirty thousand dollars being at that time a much larger sum than it is today. "And I should buy M—— [the daughter of his married sister and very fond of pretty gowns] ten new dresses!" And he laughed with his listeners.

To a member of this same group, the one to whom he had given the lilies on the train, he

one day made a prediction. She had told him she was going to Centre Harbor, then a famous resort.

"Are thee going alone?" he asked her. She was; but she was to meet a cousin there. "Thee 'll lose thy way," he said. And when she asserted that she never did that, he persisted, "Thee 'll lose thy trunk at Dover."

And she actually did!

It is to Whittier that Lucy Larcom refers in her poem about the child,

"Pouring out cups of invisible tea," and says,
"Yonder a poet sits chained at thy feet."

This was literally true, for the writer coming that day into the garden room, found him seated on the floor with the baby daughter of a relative, entertaining his young visitor and being entertained while Miss Larcom looked on smiling.

To one of these young friends to whom he used to talk of many things in Heaven and on earth, he once said: "Thy conscience stands in thy way."

"I don't see what I can do," she retorted. "I can't get rid of it. I suppose I shall have to let it stand."

To this he readily assented. His remark may have been a test.

To waken a dormant power, to teach an unfledged thought to take wing and fly boldly, to turn stray impulses into steady purpose for good, to stimulate youthful promise to become the worthy performance of maturity, to break the chains of ignorance and prejudice, as he had helped to break the iron chains of the slave, was not only delight to Whittier, it was one of the objects for which he lived. The men and women who knew him in their youth and who are still living have rich memories of words fitly spoken by which he opened their eyes to opportunities hitherto unseen, turned their thoughts into new channels and stimulated them to nobler performance.

"I like thy courage and perseverance," he wrote to a young friend entering the path of literature, "and what thee say of sometime writing out thy heart as if nobody were to read and comment upon it. I suspect that is the true way; and there are passages in thy letter which are better than thee dare to print."

One of his young friends in whose latent literary powers he had faith and whom stress of circumstances had brought into financial

difficulties, one day came to see him. Another visitor interrupted their conversation and Mr. Whittier did not get the opportunity to say to her what he would have liked to say.

The poet, however, was a man of resources. The way of speech being blocked, he took the path of suggestion. He made her a gift of some new pens — "*to try.*"

But the poet who gathered this circle of young people about him, holding them by the charm of his personality, who said that the way to keep young was to be with the young, who delighted in youth even to the last, giving evidence in himself that age is but the youth of immortality, was yet to youth, as he was to maturity, a leader — his judgment, not theirs, dominated.

This was the case one autumn day as he sat in the garden room smilingly listening to the pleadings of a bright and interesting member of that large family of his "boys and girls."

She wanted the poet to put his autograph at the bottom of a blank sheet of paper, that something might be written over it. She most carefully specified what this was to be. There had been a joke about something that had taken place in the summer when both had been at the mountains, and, not herself, but some one else,

was to write this page. But she vouched for exactly what it should be.

Mr. Whittier laughingly turned her from the point. Until at last she rose to leave. He accompanied her to the door. The writer seems still to see the girl standing on the doorstep and looking with a laugh, and yet a coaxing, into the face of the poet as she reiterated her plea — and to see him from the threshold gazing down upon her, enjoying the light in her clear brown eyes and the saucy tilt of her head, and answering with exceeding gravity of tone:

"My name is not worth anything, now that the Eastern Railroad stocks have gone so low."

Then both laughed. And the visitor departed — without the autograph.

In Amesbury lived also the "Jettie" at whose challenge that he had never written a love poem, Whittier wrote "The Henchman." It was of her the poet sang:

"To Jettie for her dancing nights,
Slippers dropped from Northern lights."

Young friends in his own town, and some of them members of his party in summer places, with their merry young voices and laughter helped the poet to many a pleasant hour —

although it is safe to say that he always did his share in securing these.

He questioned laughingly a young girl giving an account of a lecture upon "Chivalry" to which she had just been listening.

"How would thee like," he said, "to have a knight roaming around the world doing exploits in thy name?"

She retorted that unless he went to serve his country she would prefer to have him stay at home. To this he responded at once:

"Thy father [in service of his fellow-men] is a better knight-errant than any in those days."

A child of ten years whose home was on the beautiful Merrimac River, a mile from the poet's house, one day shyly left her tribute of loving reverence for him at his door. To her came the following note:

"John G. Whittier is greatly indebted to his young friend, Grace M——, for her beautiful gift of flowers. It is doubly welcome at this inclement season and she has his thanks and best wishes. Amesbury, 3rd mo, 29, 1883."

## XIV

The poet had the happiest way of making people feel at ease with themselves, and so of bringing out their best. A man often left his presence feeling himself a more worthy fellow than he had done when he had entered it. And so he ought to have been.

But there were times when peculiar exhibitions of character roused Whittier to keen comment.

While in Boston he was talking one day to two ladies at the same hotel. A young woman just out of boarding school coming to pay them a visit, was introduced to the poet. But she was far from comprehending the honor done her, and it was impossible then and there to enlighten her.

"Whittier!" she repeated patronizingly. At the school they had just been reading "Snow Bound." It was beautiful — "so fine!" And she gushed inanely in its praise. Had he read it? she questioned.

The poet admitted that *he had looked it over!*

And he admired it, of course? Taking assent for granted, she next asked Mr. Whittier *if he were any relative of the poet?* He answered her that he had not studied out what relation.

"*And have you ever seen the Poet Whittier?*" she propounded promptly.

The poet thought that he *had* met him.

For some time the young woman talked on, happy in the sound of her own voice and patronizing still more both poem and poet — to say nothing of the unknown who bore his name.

In speaking of her the poet remarked that he always pitied such young women.

Among his many experiences of autograph hunters he enjoyed the following:

He was on his way to the mountains. It was a delightful autumn day. The sunshine, the brilliant colors of earth and sky, the nectar of the clear and balmy air, all acted upon his sensitive nerves and brought a keen pleasure which prepared him for the enjoyment of any amusing phase of human nature that might present itself. The train drew up at a junction. As the poet alighted with that alertness of movement which to the last distinguished him and made his way toward his exchange, a young woman forced a passage through the rushing crowd and came up to him.

"Are you Mr. Whittier?" she inquired of him breathlessly.

The poet assented.

"Won't you please write your name in my

album?" And she held out her book open at the desired page.

His dark eyes lighting with amusement passed swiftly from the puffing train — his train on which in another moment the bell would ring and from which the conductor was already shouting, "All aboard!" — to the eager and entreating face of the speaker. He appreciated the situation; he liked her pluck. But what was he to write with? Fountain pens were then uninvented.

He flashed his glance about the station; then with the young woman in tow, hurried to the telegraph office, seized a pen, dashed off his autograph, walked swiftly to his train, and in another moment was being whirled onward.

That must have been one of the occasions when his hand smote his knee in keen appreciation of the episode.

Although Whittier never perpetrated matrimony, he was far from being like the melancholy Jacques, and much enjoyed looking at happiness through other men's eyes — and through women's too.

He was vastly amused at the man who complained to him because a certain young relative of the poet would persist in quitting the room by one door at the moment he entered it by another.

"The woman ought to do her part!" quoted the poet with great gusto from the plaint of the complainer who was too dense to read the significant scorn of the lady's conduct to him.

A mother boasted to him that she had never done anything to have her daughters married.

"But thee ought," retorted the poet.

When one day a young man had come with a span of fine horses and carried off one of his nieces to drive, Whittier commented on the event in his most humorous vein. He didn't think she cared for the young man in the least, he said. The span was the attraction. As for what her uncle thought of her going, she cared nothing at all. He didn't know what he could do about it — except find a young man with three horses!

But for all the poet's jesting, love's young dreamers were very interesting persons to him. He once said with a laugh which yet had conviction under it, that he would have made a good husband — if he'd been caught young!

He was confident that in many instances he could have made better matches for certain young persons than they had done for themselves. And with his vision that nothing escaped, his keen perceptions, his infinite tact, it came about more than once that he turned the

wavering balance of fancy in the head — or heart — of some young man, or woman, and, like destiny, resolved uncertainty into joy. And where he was thus successful, the lovers themselves had no inkling of his co-operation and outsiders could only surmise that the poet's skill might have had play.

Only once in this skillful manipulation of the susceptible heart of youth did the credit for his insinuations recoil upon his own head. A betrothed couple came one day to pay him a visit. In the course of this the young man congratulating himself upon the wisdom and success of his choice, openly commended his host for having suggested it to him — and this in the presence of the intended bride! It was in vain that the embarrassed poet hastened to repudiate the charge, of which he could never have been guilty in the manner of which he was accused. This only made the young man more insistent. Whittier's quickness of retort must have opened to him some way of escape from the situation. And he had a consolation; for in telling the story, he added that during this conversation the young woman gazed at her betrothed as if she believed wisdom would die with him.

On the day of the wedding of the poet's niece at his Amesbury home the whole house was in

commotion. The poet in a vain attempt to restore order was overheard saying with authority to his cousin, Mr. Cartland, who had become infected with the general restlessness:

"Thee sit down, Joseph. Thee isn't going to be married."

## XV

The poet's friends and neighbors had for good and sufficient reasons a peculiar form of invitation to him. From the doctor's family — often through the lips of one of its young members — the invitation would run:

"Mr. Whittier, we should be so glad to have you come to breakfast" — or dinner, or tea, as the case might be — "if you are able to come, if you are well; but do just as you feel about it." Then would follow often the announcement that some other interesting guest was to be present. "Do just as you please, Mr. Whittier," the messenger of the would-be hostess would always add anxiously; "but we shall be so glad to see you."

The poet never promised. If he were tied, his headache would be sure to find him out; so, this method was taken as a charm to outwit the fiend. Quite often it was successful, and the poet would be on hand promptly. At other times the family having waited until it was believed that he was not coming, would sit down to table, when the doorbell would ring and Mr. Whittier appear. At such times he perhaps had a headache but had decided that it would be no worse there than at home. And having been free from obligation, and come because it was

his own wish, he was delightful. To listen to him was an education — as to listen to him in the garden room when he talked in his deepest moods, and often then to one hearer, was an inspiration.

His unsolicited visits also made red-letter days. Sometimes on his way home from his customary walk to the post office in the morning, or in the evening, he would take the street leading past the house of some friend. Word would be tossed about from one to another, "There's Mr. Whittier! Is he coming in?" And eager eyes would watch his movements. "Oh, he's going by!" in accents of deep disappointment — "No, he's coming in!" in jubilant tones.

And the visit would be one to be remembered.

It was upon some such occasion that the poet eagerly caught up a remark by his hostess, that people liked a good listener.

"Yes, that's it, Mrs. S——," he said, "a good listener."

For the poet was quite able to talk, and he liked to do it.

It was Whittier's habit to put on his hat when he chanced to answer the door-bell. This might have been on account of his neuralgia and the northwest wind which often

swept freely down the street, or — what was worse to him — the east wind which swept up it and into the doorway. Or else, being uncertain who his visitor might be, he would possibly find it convenient to appear to be going out. But whatever had been his reason for donning the hat, upon most occasions it was promptly laid aside and the visitor was cordially invited to enter. This visitor was perhaps a neighbor, or friend, or both in one — or a stranger who thus spending an hour with the poet, forever afterward cherished a happy memory.

Readers of Whittier's poems will recall one "On a Sun Dial," beginning

> "With warning hand I mark Time's
> rapid flight."

In regard to this inscription, Dr. Henry I. Bowditch wrote his friend in Amesbury — Whittier's physician — under date of December 30, 1854:

"Warm regards to Whittier, and tell him I still *hope* for the inscription for my old dial — that is, I wish if you have a fair chance you would *gently allude* to my hopes; but, pray, do not let him think me troublesome about it. I think I could get one from H——, or F——,

but I would prefer Whittier to any other that I know."

Apparently, the "gentle allusion" must have been made with success — judging from the following extract of January fifteenth, 1855, about two weeks later. "The more I read Whittier's lines," wrote Bowditch to the doctor, "the more I admire them. Everybody is delighted with them, and I am obliged to give copies in every direction."

With Bowditch's noble character, his delightful enthusiasm and anti-slavery zeal, his frankness and charm, it was not to be wondered at that the admiration of the two men was reciprocal. There comes to mind the speech of the poet, after looking long and earnestly at a photograph of Dr. Bowditch. He glanced up at last to say that it made him think of one of the old Greek fathers.

Those who knew Whittier well remember the suddenness of his leave-takings. For, no matter how tranquilly he was seated and how absorbed in his subject he appeared, one could never be sure that the next moment he would not rise, make his adieus, and be off, all in a breath.

Somebody asked him one day why he always took leave so suddenly? He answered that

the habit came from early training, that his father did not like prolixity — no, nor did his father's son! Indeed, one day Whittier talking of himself, said that as he grew older he could perceive traits of his father coming out more strongly in himself.

It was the same way with his journeys. An announcement at the breakfast table would often be the first intimation that his bag was packed for the next train. That alertness distinguished him to the very last. He knew what he wanted and went straight to the mark.

Yet when in pursuance of his object, the success of the anti-slavery movement, or helping to plan and organize that party to which slavery owed its downfall, no one could navigate the troubled waters of politics and tack to fill the sails or avoid the flaws with more skill than Whittier. The power to manipulate men he had to a degree that would have made him dangerous but for his high principle. For with him honor was always first.

He never lost interest in politics in its highest sense, nor failed in his part as freeman and patriot. In 1883 he wrote:

"I have been ill almost ever since the first of September. I managed to go to the Convention at Boston and staid only long enough

to vote for Robinson, after which I was ill and sleepless for four days and nights —— more than one hundred and twenty hours in all. I am now somewhat better and shall go to Amesbury this week."

## XVI

In the long winter evenings when the poet's niece was away at boarding school and storm or some other cause for dearth of visitors had left him and his housekeeper alone together, and his eyes would not permit him to read, or, perhaps when he strove to banish care and pain and the memory of his loss, he would sometimes entertain himself and this Scotswoman with stories.

The more absurd these were, the better for him. On occasions they were witch stories, the most horrible New England legends that memory could recall from his extensive reading and his imagination color with new vividness. In the telling of them, manner, tone, words — all would combine to make her flesh creep and her hair stand on end.

At last she would laugh.

Then he would turn upon her with assumed severity. "Margaret, don't thee believe it?"

"Did you see it, Mr. Whittier?" she would demand, concerning some marvellous vision of the unknown upon which he had been dilating.

"No," he would confess. "But they told me it was so."

And he would join in her mirth.

To this never failing sense of humor Whittier owned somewhat of the clearness of his mental outlook, and much of his power of retort.

But there is something infinitely touching in this trying to make the best of things as he sat by his lonely fireside with the world applauding him.

In the winter of 1866–67, being detained in Boston by a very severe snow-storm, he wrote to this same housekeeper: "I'm waiting for proofs of 'Tent on the Beach.' Live sumptuously; patronize the butcher and baker; and take good care of Charlie [the parrot]; and I'll be home as soon as I can."

On his arrival a few days later he greeted her with: "Well, Margaret, I've been 'snow bound.'"

"Yes," she answered him. "I don't know but you'll have to write another 'Snow Bound.'"

Thought carried him to that loved room where there looked down upon him from the walls the pictured faces of his mother and his sister with, to his imagination, somewhat of the gaze of the far-away reality. He answered her with a sadness in his tone that she never forgot. "There'd be only thee and Charlie and the cat to write about," he said.

His dear ones were ever the undercurrent of his thoughts. In 1881 he wrote from Amesbury, "I am here to be at the election on the sixth. I like to visit Amesbury. . . . I think sadly of the loss of so many dear friends."

"And yet, dear heart, remembering thee,"

he wrote of Elizabeth in "Snow Bound." That memory, beautiful, Heavenly, never faded with the years. In his submission to God's will, and in his faith, the grief of time grew into the hope of eternity; but the thought was always there. In 1887 he said in a letter to the writer who also had lived in Amesbury: "I often think of the old days when thy father was alive and sister Lizzie and we were all together." Two years later — only three years before his own death, he wrote again, "I have not forgotten the old days in Amesbury." To those who had known these he was glad to speak of them.

The Mrs. C—— across the way from his home, whose long years of friendship with the Whittier family have been spoken of, told the writer how after the death of his mother and sister, Whittier's first act on coming home from an absence was to go into the room in which hung the portraits of these two, and to stand

before them, not only as if greeting them on his home coming, but as if also receiving their welcome to a house in which to him their presence always lingered and made it home as was no other place on earth.

From the day of his sister's death through all the greater ease of life which came from his success and his fame, and — far dearer to him than either — the honor and love which flowed in to him from all sides, he yet never failed to feel this loss of home.

So strong was this sense of loss that there was a time, a few years after the passing of Elizabeth, when it seemed as if such memories would prove too much for him.

In the winter of his early sixties he was stricken with an illness in which his life hung in the balance. It was no acute disease, but the vital force in him seemed to have run so low and his recuperative power to be so little, that for weeks the doctor, who watched over him with increasing concern, was very anxious as to the outcome.

For it was not medicine or even regimen which was especially needed. It was most of all lovingness, tenderness, home care that Whittier required. At that time a touch of home meant life itself to the home-loving poet

who was actually dying of the loneliness of his hearthstone. That winter his niece, his housekeeper when at home with him, was at the South teaching the freedmen.

At this crisis his nephew's wife came from her home in New York and was with him for months. A trained nurse could not have been more watchful or more judicious, and no daughter could have been more kind and tender in her ministrations. The doctor took heart. This brooding over the poet, this constant, tactful interest in him, this cheerful face and graceful carriage always in his home — of his own family by marriage if not by birth — was, as the doctor had foreseen, the one necessity without which no other help could have availed, but with which all skill could readily co-operate. Whittier himself never undervalued his niece's ministrations, but always said that under Heaven he owed his life largely to her care.

So, the poet came back from the edge of the Dark Valley where his feet had been treading. He long outlived the physician who had watched over him with such solicitude.

## XVII

In the May of 1868 Whittier wrote to his sister's friend and his own:

"Many thanks for thy very interesting letter from Vineland. I wished I was there when I read it. It has been dismally cold here most of the time since thee left. Nothing has been done in the gardens. The snow, however, is all gone now and there have been a few days of spring weather. The grass is springing up, the arbutus is almost in bloom, and the maple at our door is in full blossom. I have been a week in Boston and vicinity and got home last night. I was at Mrs. Pitman's and one or two other places, but generally kept quiet. Yesterday at three o'clock when I left Boston, the thermometer was near summer heat; before I got home the air was full of rain and sleet; and it was winter. I feel the effects of the change a good deal this morning.

"There is nothing new here." Then follow a few items of news of Amesbury. "When shall thee return?" he adds. "We miss thee a great deal. A —— left us a week ago. Lizzie sends love. She had a great time at Richmond." [The niece who had been at the South teaching the freedmen.]

Again in May, six years later, he writes from Amesbury: "I have been a good deal unwell this spring, and had to keep house for two or three weeks. I hope I am getting better. . . . Yesterday the ministers and laymen came here in great force. The orthodox houses were filled with hungry guests, and as the day was beautiful, they had a good time. . . . Mrs. S—— from N—— and Gail Hamilton and Lucy Larcom were at our house. . . . Mr. Pickard has been here and staid two days. This is the second time he has been here since thee left. . . . We had a great thunderstorm on the last seventh day night. Spring has come in earnest now. The grass is green on the hills, the elms are putting out their leaves, and the maples are in blossom."

In another letter he says that he should have written before but for his many visitors and the "overwhelming mass of letters" that had been pouring down upon him; and also but for illness — "a hard attack of neuralgia," he writes, "which has now nearly passed off, and a weary time of sleeplessness remains. I want to go to Amesbury, but cannot until I feel stronger and better. The extreme cold of the past month has been very trying. . . . My dear old friend, Mrs. Pitman, has been very

sick, but is now improving. Mrs. Fields has had a severe attack of pneumonia, but is now thought out of danger. Things, I believe, remain about the same at Amesbury. I was saddened by the death of Mr. B——. I shall miss him much. The C—— boys are still with Mrs. B——; but a place must be found for them soon and I hardly know what to do about it. I hope to get to Amesbury by the middle of the month."

This letter was from Oak Knoll in the February of 1888.

In Whittier's note to his poem, "Voyage of the Jettie," written at Wayside Inn at West Ossipee, he says that to readers who know the place it will recall pleasant seasons by the Bearcamp and Chocorua. And he adds that to himself the verses have a special interest "from the fact that they were written, or improvised, under the eye and for the amusement of a beloved invalid friend whose last earthly summers faded from the mountain ranges of Ossipee and Sandwich."

This "beloved invalid friend" was the father of the "C—— boys" mentioned in the above letter — one of those Amesbury "boys and girls" in whom the poet showed an unfailing interest. This gifted young man was an

early victim of tuberculosis. For years in his failing health he was watched over with solicitude by the poet, whose letters make frequent mention of him. On the invalid's death Whittier wrote, "I miss him sadly."

The poet's care for the orphan boys was characteristic of his fidelity.

"There is nothing especially new in Amesbury," he says in a letter to the writer, "except the one hundredth anniversary of the old Rocky Hill meeting house for which Mrs. Spofford wrote an admirable poem. The C——'s are at Lion's Mouth. Dr. M—— D—— is in attendance on her mother who is failing with consumption. I met A—— and M—— A—— in Portland. I had not seen them for a long time before. I found Lizzie (Mrs. Pickard) on the whole better than I had seen her for years. M—— B—— is seriously ill with spinal trouble and I fear with no prospect of recovery. The beautiful June weather is very welcome after the long and bitter winter and spring. I enjoy it, but am hardly able to get about much."

He writes from Oak Knoll:

"I have been here for three or four weeks, much of the time ill with cold and rheumatism.

I have been close indoors most of the time, though I went one day to Boston to see my brother who was troubled with his old enemy, inflammatory rheumatism. . . . I shall hope to see you when I return to Amesbury sometime this month. Have you seen the Cartlands yet? . . . Tell thy mother I will send her by the Cartlands who are reading it, the 'Life of Dr. Norman McLeod' which I know she will like. It is one of the pleasantest books I have read for years."

A letter to M — C — in the May of 1889 records the loss of other friends:

"I have been in Amesbury for a week or ten days," he says. "The great Methodist Conference met here last week with one hundred and fifty ministers and a bishop. Of course, I had callers all the week. I suppose thee have seen in the papers that my sister's and my old friend, Mrs. Harriet W. Sewall, was killed on the railroad crossing at Wellesley." And he adds: "Yesterday I had the sad news of the death of my old friend of sixty years, President Barnard of Columbia College. So they all drop away! The spring weather with its sudden changes is rather hard for me and I am not feeling quite as strong as usual. I think the neighbors here are pretty well. . . .

I hope thee will be home by the time of our quarterly meeting which takes place on the fourth Thursday of this month."

After the celebration of his seventieth birthday:

"I am very glad thy golden silence has become silvern," he says in a letter to this old friend. "I was just on the point of writing thee. . . . What a queer fuss has been made because I have grown old and got the rheumatism! I trust it is about over here, but I am now getting letters from England. I have had hundreds and many of them I was obliged to answer. It is all so strange and unexpected. Of course I am very grateful for the words of kindness which have reached me. I only wish I deserved them better. If thee see M—— G—— again, give her my love, and to Dr. Furness also, he is a noble man. . . . I have just returned from Amesbury and shall go to Boston next week. I have had a rather hard time with headache and other aches but feel better now. The weather has been below zero yesterday, but today is springlike again — the winter wears away very comfortably even here, and it will soon be spring by the almanac; but I suppose winter will linger in its lap until May."

"I had more than one thousand letters on my birthday!" he wrote to another friend, "and callers without number. I have not been able to answer a quarter part of my letters. I begin to dread to touch a pen."

## XVIII

"Hail to the coming singers!
Hail to the brave light-bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare."

Whittier delighted in the achievements of others. It was no idle word of his:

"Thy neighbor's wrong is thy present hell,
His bliss thy Heaven."

To crowd out anyone from any good whatever to make room for himself would have been impossible to Whittier. He had no rivals; to him all who strove to help in the world were coadjutors. Yet, as he said one day in speaking of his own work and of literary work in general, "In order to succeed one must have ambition."

His judgment of his fellow-poets and writers was without a shadow of that perhaps unconscious detraction which would have warped some natures in seeing these others so plentifully reaping the harvest of their toils, while his own garners were at that time comparatively empty; for, as the world knows, it was only later in life that these were filled to overflowing.

But he was always so much in love with what was high and true that he had a share in the joy of its reward with whomever this was found. It is easy to appreciate the energy with which he said, "Emerson is the one American who will live a thousand years."

In commenting upon a severe criticism upon Mrs. Stowe, touching her lack of oversight and discipline in her own household and its results, occasionally disastrous, he indulged in a little quiet amusement at scenes reported, and then remarked earnestly that a great many persons could keep house, but how few could give the world what Mrs. Stowe had given and was still giving it. Under all circumstances, her mission was to keep on writing.

"Does thee see pictures when thee is writing?" he questioned a young author. And he listened with attention to her answer that she always saw them, often vividly, and that the persons in her stories moved and spoke and acted before her as if she were looking upon real people. It was so with himself, he returned; he saw the places and persons and the scenes he wrote about enacted before him. He said that he always had to think with a pen in his hand. He said also that it made him ill to write.

"So, victory has perched upon thy banners

and thee have stormed and taken the Patent Office! I am heartily glad of it," wrote the poet to one of his young friends concerning an invention just patented. But he made no reference to the fact that a word from himself had helped to bring to an end some tedious delays in the path of that victory.

He once told an amusing story of the result of one of his recommendations. A young man of his acquaintance was in negotiation for a school in the wilds of New Jersey, and asked the poet for a reference. This the applicant readily obtained, and confidently handed to the school committee who were interviewing him. "The members passed the letter along from one to another and looked wise," said Whittier, adding with his inimitable silent laughter, "Not a man of them could read. But the letter answered the purpose; W—— got his school!"

One evening as he sat talking in the garden room, gazing into his open fire, it furnished him an apt illustration of the uselessness of giving people advice contrary to the trend of their own inclinations. He asserted that one's own experience is of no use as a warning to others. He declared that should one try

to warn another against the danger of being burned, the other would question:

"You said you put your hand into the fire?"

"Yes," the adviser would respond.

"And you got it burned?"

"Yes, I did," the first would answer, still more decidedly.

"Very well," the adventurer would retort. "Now I want to put my hand in and see how it feels."

Through all the changing years Whittier was the same dear lover of a jest. In his age he one day handed his photograph to the writer with the comment: "There's the old rascal!"

In the July of 1887 in a letter from Centre Harbor to the writer, whom he had known from her childhood, he wrote:

"It is too bad that you [her mother and herself] are in Amesbury and I in Centre Harbor. It is like the case of John Gilpin whose wife dined in Eglinton and he in Ware. I came up here quite ill, but I think I am feeling somewhat better, though I have not found the Fountain of Youth in these rocky hills, and probably should not if I went to Florida, like Ponce de Leon."

While he was one day walking in Boston with a gentleman, he met two of his young

friends. He not only stopped to speak to them, as of course, but with care he introduced his companion to them. In the roar of the traffic, however, the name of this stranger was lost to them. But concluding from his associate and his own appearance that he was a person of distinction, they scrutinized him as closely as courtesy permitted.

And they were right. For, later, at their home, the poet said of his companion in the city, "That was Canon Kingsley." He knew the pleasure it would be to them to learn that they had exchanged even a word with the great English author; and he had not allowed the noise of the street and his own dislike of talking in it to stand in the way.

The poet dubbed as "specimen bricks" those innumerable manuscripts which from all parts were sent to him for commendation and criticism — some even to be placed. With his spirit of helpfulness he was much distressed by these, both because they were often "impossible," and also because in any case, he had not time or strength to attend to them.

But where a special claim held him, it was wonderful with what persistency of kind effort he would follow the career of some writer in whose ability he believed.

His sympathy, once aroused, never failed. To a person whose literary struggle he had watched with untiring interest, frequently praising work accomplished, he sent the following message of encouragement.

A mutual friend had come to see him. Having ushered her into the garden room, he sat down with her and soon began to question her concerning this writer's financial success. Finally, he said to the friend:

"Thee tell F—— that I never made any money until I wrote 'Snow Bound.' "

## XIX

Nearly a score of years before the Civil War a dozen men and women at the invitation of that hospitable pair, Mr. and Mrs. Ashby of Newburyport, abolitionists, friends of William Lloyd Garrison, Whittier, and other abolitionists, drove one day in June to a beautiful spot on the Newbury shore of the Merrimac River.

There, among the laurels in bloom, they inaugurated an outing which from that time for twenty-one years became annual. All the early members of this small party were abolitionists, despised and in a sense ostracized. They sought a day's recreation by woods and water where earth and sky welcomed them. There, forgetful of hardships past and to come, they gathered at will the mountain laurel, the blooming of which they had assembled to celebrate. Little did they imagine how soon the laurels of a noble fame were to crown their labors for the slave.

With the years, however, the original dozen of the first "Laurel Party" expanded into hundreds of guests, and the once unnoted recreation of the politically despised few became a social function to which invitation was eagerly sought. Whittier's presence and his

poem, when he wrote for the occasion, were no small part of the day's enjoyment.

Among these poems were "Our River," "The Laurels," and "Revisited."

It was in 1865, at one of these later crowded Laurel parties, that the poet gave evidence of how — even in small things — he held his faith higher than men's criticisms of his acts.

A day in June. The heavens were full of soft clouds which in their brief shadowings seemed but to intensify the brilliance of the summer sunshine. Looming against the sky stood the high bluffs with their dark coronal of giant pines, their feet caressed by the murmuring kisses of New England's most beautiful river.

Under these pines was gathered a crowd of people through whose purpose of pleasure in the day and the scene ran the expectation of a deeper pleasure through the listening ear and the quick response of thought to thought.

For they knew that Whittier had brought a poem. Many persons of reputation in the world of letters were there; many who ranked high in social life and some known to the world of politics. It was a gathering before which a man would desire to be at his best. Before it stood the poet who had well proved

himself the inspired voice of the trees and the birds, the river and the sky. But all knew that at that time he had uttered a paean for the victory of Freedom and Union.

Every eye was lifted to Whittier as he stood erect as the pines above him, lithe in his motions as the watching birds and with somewhat of their unexpectedness in movement. In his hand he held his poem. Would he read it himself? At first it appeared so to those who did not know him well. For he stood for a little time still holding it in his hand. And in that moment — to the writer at least — was enacted a by-play, in itself slight enough, but, if understood, giving the key to the whole complex character of Whittier.

For the Quaker poet stood with his hat on. Even in passing his poem to another to be read, he would be obliged to answer by a few words the demand made upon him. To do this he must take off his hat, as other men would do. His hand was lifted toward it.

Midway, however, it paused — Quakers spoke with their hats on.

Yet the distinguished gathering before him was chiefly not of his own sect. A proper consideration for the customs of society — yes, even courtesy — demanded this removal; and to social impressions the poet was very

sensitive. Yet, to one other monitor was he still more sensitive. That unbending principle which governed his whole life asserted itself. Even in so slight a matter he would be true to his faith.

His hand dropped by his side. It was with his hat on that he spoke the few apt words with which he gave his poem to be read.

Small wonder that "Revisited" was a paean to Him who in the return of peace had given, not to the anti-slavery party alone, but to the whole country,

"....beauty for ashes
And the oil of joy for mourning long."

And it was small wonder that to the river the poet sang:

"Sing soft, sing low, our lowland river,
Under thy banks of laurel bloom;
Softly and sweet as the hour beseemeth,
Sing us the songs of peace and home.

"Type of the Northland's strength and glory,
Pride and hope of our home and race, —
Freedom lending to rugged labor
Tints of beauty and lines of grace.

"For though by the Master's feet untrodden,
Though never His word has stilled thy waves,
Well for us may thy shores be holy,
With Christian altars and saintly graves."

The whole poem is full of noble thought and rhythmic beauty:

"Sing on! bring down, O lowland river,
The joy of the hills to the waiting sea;
The wealth of the vales, the pomp of mountains,
The breath of the woodlands, bear with thee."

## XX

In 1890, when Haverhill, his native town, was to celebrate its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary, Whittier was called upon for a poem. He wrote to his friend, Col. F——:

"I find I cannot write a hymn or anything to be sung, but I shall have a poem of perhaps one hundred lines. I am afraid it will not amount to much, but it will show my good will at least. If needed, I can have it ready by the middle of the month."

Later, he wrote: "I send the verses for the celebration. I wish the committee in charge would print it and send me two copies of the proof, as I may have to make some slight changes before it is ready for final printing. As I cannot read it myself, I must request that Professor Churchill of Andover may do it if he is not engaged otherwise. . . . He is a good reader and good readers are very rare. I want it read so well that its faults and failings shall be forgotten in the fine elocution of the Professor. I have written it under difficult circumstances, but I hope it may not be found amiss for the occasion. Have you had any correspondence with Haverhill in England? I think it would be pleasant to have a greeting from there."

When it was found that Professor Churchill had already been engaged to read another poem for the same occasion, Whittier answered the suggestion of taking another reader:

"I am quite willing that Mr. B—— should read my rhymes. Mrs. Livermore, I think, would prefer to speak for herself to reading other folks' verses. The committee can do as they think best. I shall be satisfied anyway. There are only one hundred and sixteen lines and they can be read in five minutes.

"I hear that there will be a large gathering at Haverhill from all the neighboring towns and cities. If the weather is fine it will be a great day for Haverhill. I send my picture of last year. On the whole, I think it is better to give the author of the 'Haverhill' poem as he is."

A few days later he wrote: "I send forty or fifty copies of my poem. You may need some for the city's guests and for reporters. If Mr. B—— is to read the poem, he should have a copy of it to look over. I was pleased to meet Mr. Gurteen of old Haverhill. I had some correspondence with him some years ago. He brings a beautiful token of good will from our English namesake with him."

Mr. B—— went to Whittier's home and read the poem to him before reciting it. For when

anything of the poet's was to be read in public, Whittier was desirous to have it given as he intended it, and, when he could, he liked to meet the reader and listen to his rendering of it. He would point out changes here and there, saying of a certain passage, "I meant it *so*," and of another, "I meant that *so*." And the reader must have been dense indeed if he did not catch the meaning, and unappreciative if he ever forgot those wonderful intonations and renderings of the poet's verse by the poet himself.

## XXI

Whittier would never take part in an "Authors Reading," or in anything that had the least publicity. It was only in the garden room at Amesbury that he would read aloud a poem of his own. Or it may have been under the pines at Intervale towering like the forest primeval, or in some other quiet nook among the hills, with a little group of listeners about him — or perhaps with only one eager listener. Then his voice would rise and fall in notes and cadences which gave a wonderful power to the rendering of his own poems and a new perception of beauty in what had already seemed beautiful, a new awe and sublimity in what had before seemed grand.

When in the garden room he read "The Palatine" to an entranced listener, his voice made the scene live before her eyes; and in the inevitable retribution following sin prepared the way for that thought which pierces to the depth of life. Never again can that poem give forth its wierdness, its tragic, and awful pathos as it did in the tones of its author. There was nothing of "elocution." His reading was word painting; one shivered when he said:

"Is there, then, no death for a word once spoken?
Was never a deed but left its token
Written on tables never broken?"

His housekeeper, the Scotswoman before referred to, told how one day she had read Mr. Whittier an account in the paper of a wierd light mysteriously seen at sea; and she added, "He wrote a poem about it."

This was "The Palatine."

One day after reading "The Pennsylvania Pilgrim" to the writer, he told her that he had written the poem to please himself in the story of what was dear to him, and that he did not so much care if people did not like it.

Indeed, the greatness of his fame never kept him from a certain depreciation of his own work, which declared itself in speech and often in his letters. The world sang his praises; but he held to his own verdicts.

"I love the old melodious lays
Which softly melt the ages through,"

he writes in the "Proem" of his published poems. He loved best the songs for which he could find no words — like all true poets. Who can say that he may not now be singing these in the music of a new tongue?

No less than he loved Milton's poetry did Whittier love the great poet's sonorous prose. As has been said before, Whittier's rendering of his own poems brought forth their swing and rhythm and their innermost meaning with a vividness that no one else could give them. To watch the poet as he thus rendered one of his own poems, to listen to the intonations which deepened the melody of the verse was an experience not to be forgotten.

One day Whittier told the writer of his having begun a poem — his biographer also tells this — upon the banishing of the Arcadians from their country. But he added that he had abandoned it on learning that Longfellow was writing "Evangeline." His listener realized the fervor of Hugenot indignation (for Whittier had Huguenot blood in his veins) which would have inspired his muse at the wrongs of those innocent people and the pathos with which he would have told their story, and expressed her regret that he had not written the poem.

But he answered with decision: "No; it was better so. Longfellow has done the work as it should have been done."

One day the doctor said to the poet: "You have written so much, Mr. Whittier, that I

suppose you write now without labor — that writing is easy to you?"

"No," returned Whittier emphatically. "Everything is labor to me. I don't know any easy writing."

In addition to this careful work — rather, as a part of it — no one realized better than the poet the difference between a poem in manuscript and the same poet in print. So, he would often say to one of his young neighbors — a printer — "Fred, I want to see thee a minute." And he would hand the young man the poem — or a portion of it — to put into type, so that the poet before sending to it the publishers might judge for himself how it would look printed. He used to say, appreciative of the glamour of acceptance, that print improved things.

There was once at least, however, when he waited for no such self-criticism, when the spirit moved him so strongly that it swept away all but the emotion it kindled in his heart — there was once, at least, that it was "easy writing" for him so far as the flowing of his pen was concerned, which could not go fast enough to keep pace with the rush of his thoughts — although, no doubt, he paid by days of head-

ache for the all but involuntary toil of his spirit. It was when he wrote his paean for the passage through Congress of the Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery.

That morning the poet came home from the Fifth Day (Thursday) meeting of the Friends, his eyes large with excitement — as one who saw him told the writer — and, as if the thought in his heart and the words on his lips were too overwhelming to be true, he cried:

"What are the bells ringing for? The flags are up — and away up!"

Then when there was no longer question as to the meaning of the flags and the bells, he sat down at his desk and wrote like one inspired — as, indeed, he was. I think his biographer tells, as did also one in the house, that there was no walking back and forth in the room, as was often the case when he was writing, but the words flowed upon the paper as fast as his pen could move.

When the poem was written, it was sent to the publisher with scarcely a revision.

Meanwhile, in his own town, as people with moist eyes and glad hearts listened to the bells of freedom, they said one to another:

Whittier is writing a poem!

Thus was "Laus Deo!" born.

## XXII

When George MacDonald came to America upon his lecture tour and brought with him his wife and son, he consented to give his lecture in Amesbury, although the lecture committee there could by no means pay him his price. But the fact that Whittier had invited him while in Amesbury to be his guest more than compensated for the meagerness of financial rewards. In truth, it was often the case that the hospitality of the poet compensated for the poverty of the lecture bureau, and the Amesbury lyceum had speakers of far higher ability than its own funds could have supplied.

MacDonald's lecture was most interesting, and simply delivered in his fascinating Scottish accent.

In the evening a deputation from the Scottish Club of Amesbury came to him in the poet's home, bringing Whittier's complete works to present to the poet and novelist of their native land. Whittier's welcome and the Scottish poet's delight made the event a "red-letter day" to the Club.

But when the two poets were at last alone together, they must have spent a memorable time; they had in common an untraveled world

of sympathy; yet they were different. The spiritual world is MacDonald's world and his heroes are ideal rather than weighted with the weaknesses and foibles of human nature. But Whittier tells us of reality — the reality in the natural and in the spiritual world, for in both of these he lived. His poems are no dreams, but actualities seen upon the heights of life. His men and women are those whom we daily meet, but with the veil which for most of us is upon their hearts drawn aside, giving us wonderful glimpses into the holy of holies. It was not strange that the two poets had much to say to each other, and that afterward Whittier remarked of his guest; "There is no man in England whom I should have been more glad to meet than George MacDonald."

In connection with this visit occurred an incident characteristic both of Whittier and of his niece, afterward Mrs. Pickard, who herself told it to the writer.

The poet received many very beautiful gifts, some of which this niece while keeping his house would put about in the rooms, that visitors also might enjoy them. But Whittier's native abhorrence of ostentation, together with his Quaker simplicity, did not approve of this display, and the gifts would be relegated to

their hiding-places. Over and over would she try the experiment, and always with the same result, although occasionally, her uncle would not immediately notice the ornaments and so they would hold their own for a few days; but only to disappear in the end. Thus the game would go on and neither would mention the subject to the other.

Among these gifts was a very handsome silver cake-basket, for cake-baskets were then in vogue. Several times had Lizzie attempted to grace the table with this when guests were present. But her uncle had always left his guests to make an errand to the dining-room just before the meal, and the tabooed basket had always vanished from the table.

But when George MacDonald, accompanied by his wife and son came to Amesbury to give his lecture, because, as has been said, he could be the guest of Whittier, Lizzie felt that if the opportunity to display the cake-basket was ever to come, it should be then. But how could she do it? For her uncle, with all his pleasure in his guests was not too much absorbed in his brother poet to omit the preliminary survey of the table.

The cake-basket was not there. Well-pleased, he returned to his guests.

It was when the summons to the evening

meal had been given and the company was about to be seated, that Lizzie appeared, in her hand the well-filled cake-basket which she placed conspicuously upon the table and made haste to seat herself behind the teacups.

If the poet, who never missed the humorous side of anything, did not strike his hand upon his knee and cry his familiar utterance, "Capital! Capital!" it was because at the moment the situation made it impossible to him. He surely appreciated his niece no less because she — one of his own family — had done what his foes, political and personal, had never been able to accomplish — outwitted him!

## XXIII

Whittier sometimes received suggestions for his poems from stories told him directly, possibly, for the purpose, as was the case with the episode of "Barbara Frietchie." But, no doubt, persons often gave him suggestions for poems without suspecting that they were doing so.

"I should think the old captain would come out of his grave, Mr. Whittier," cried indignantly, Mrs. M——, a neighbor and friend, as she sat one evening in the garden room making complaint of a use, or, rather, of a disuse of something over which the members of the Improvement Society of the town — she being one — who were busy looking up its many antiquities, were very wrathful. "Yes, I should think he would come out of his grave," she repeated, "to see that old well of his which he dug himself for the free use of the public all covered over with rubbish in this way. It ought to be opened up."

She went on to free her mind still more concerning public rights and the neglect of these, as illustrated in the case of the old well dug by Valentine Bagley for the wayfarer, so that none who passed by might have to endure a

tithe of the agony of thirst that he himself had known when at one time lost in the desert. Then in his distress he had vowed that should he ever return to his home, he would dig a well as a thank-offering. This was the well.

But what had been intended for a boon had become useless from neglect — a disfigurement.

The poet was deeply interested. "Yes," he answered her, "it ought to be opened." And in a moment he added, "We will have it opened."

And in his own beautiful way Whittier told the true story of Valentine Bagley, an old-time worthy of Amesbury, of his shipwreck, his desert wanderings, his final rescue, and the carrying out of his resolve to save others from, at least, one of his many sufferings — thirst. The poem tells how by the side of the road running from what was then the village to the old ferry crossing the Merrimac, the returned wanderer dug this well for the benefit of all who were thirsting as they passed by it.

But it had been choked up by neglect and abuse.

Whittier's poem, however, rescued it from this neglect and lifted it into fame.

This is how "The Captain's Well" came to be written. And the thousand dollars which the poet received for it from the "New York Ledger" served also some other benevolence.

Of this poem he wrote to his sister's dear friend and his own:

"I enclose a copy of 'The Captain's Well,' though perhaps thee have seen it. There were some mistakes in it. Hundreds of copies of it have been sold in Amesbury and as many in Newburyport. I don't think much of it myself. When will you [herself and party] return" [from Bermuda], he adds. "We miss thee very much and shall be glad to see thee back again."

Among the relics kept in the Whittier Home in Amesbury, the house now owned and opened to the public by the "Whittier Home Association" of that town, is an old cradle that belonged to Valentine Bagley, the hero of "The Captain's Well." And in the Amesbury burying ground, not far from the poet's own grave, is the grave of this Valentine Bagley, with an epitaph in the style of many others of that time. It reads:

"His languishing head is at rest,
Its thinking and aching is o'er,
His quiet, unmovable breast
Is moved by affliction no more."

In a letter to the writer, to whom Whittier spoke frequently of his own work, he said of a song of his, "My poem in the 'Atlantic' is not a

very nice one — matter of fact and not poetical; but it tells a sorry story of the old time." This is an illustration of how his world-wide fame never convinced him that he had reached the highest upon his own lines; he always looked beyond for it — happily for himself and for the world.

In a letter written December, 1881, he says: "I have passed a quiet birthday on the seventeenth. It is always a serious matter — passing these milestones of life. At my age I cannot look forward to many more. I send thee a copy of what is called my 'Birthday Book.' It does not amount to much — mere shreds and patches, but it is pretty so far as the publishers are concerned. I go to Amesbury some day the last of this week, if the weather is right and I feel able. Sometime when I am there I should be glad to see thee. I hope to be in Boston in February, and Lizzie also hopes to be there. If so, we will be glad to see thee, and will let thee know."

In a letter written from Oak Knoll in the March of 1886, he speaks of what might have been his niece's fatal accident in an elevator.

"I should have written thee before," he says, "but my strength was not equal to my wish and writing has been almost out of the question

with me this winter. I think of my old friends, however, always. I went to Boston for the first time for more than a year, to meet Lizzie; but my lameness and sleeplessness drove me back soon. Lizzie's accident upset me a good deal, but I am so thankful it was no worse. It was a great escape. . .

Of course I shall send thee the very small volume of poems ['Saint Gregory's Guest'] as soon as it is printed." And he adds with that self-distrust so wonderful in one of his genius and world-wide fame: "It is a poor affair, I fear, but if it was a mistake, it is not likely to be repeated. I only wanted to speak to my old friends once more. Thy old and loving friend."

Now on one hand, now on the other, the poet gathered the material for his poems; sometimes, as we know, these came from incidents told him by those among whom he lived, or by strangers. But often legend furnished the subject; or, best of all, the inspiration of the Spirit which taught him high and holy thoughts.

To one who asked him if his poem "Among the Hills," was taken from life, he answered that it was as this ought to be, and went on to speak of the hopeless drudgery of the farmer's

life as he had seen it in his youth, and of the poverty of ideals in that life, sometimes its actual squalor. In his own home, however, the ideal had always existed; and life there, however simple, was never destitute of attractions, or of that intercourse with a wider outlook which enlarged its own horizon.

Is it to be supposed that he knows nothing today of how the farmer's horizon has widened, how distance has become lessened, if not annihilated, and how the news of the world is left at his doorstone? It has been wisely said that poets are the true prophets; they have visions of the blessings to come upon the world.

Sings the poet:

"The airs of heaven blow o'er me;
A glory shines before me
Of what mankind shall be, —
Pure, generous, brave, and free.

"A dream of man and woman,
Diviner, but still human,
Solving the riddle old,
Shaping the Age of Gold!

"The love of God and neighbor;
An equal-handed labour;
The richer life, where beauty
Walks hand in hand with duty."

## XXIV

"A dream to me alone is Arno's vale,"

writes Whittier in his "Last Walk in Autumn." Yet those who know say that his pen pictures of Italy are perfect. He is a consolation and an inspiration to them upon whom life's limitations press.

Judging by his reading, the world of books was indeed his world. Books alone were never his world, however; he chose "living guests who love the day;" and he had them. For from East and West men and women of thought and power and accomplishment came to him who could not go to them. And not even personal presence or telegraph or telephone did he require to draw about himself a network of communication with the best and most interesting of the world's thinkers and workers. In all parts beyond his sight, he knew them by letter and message. Through travelers and books the world of his picturing was not far from the real world. But especially did he perceive it through that imagination which saw

"The marble palaces of Ind
Rise round him in the snow and wind."

One day there came to visit him at Oak Knoll a widely traveled man. Whittier talked with him concerning the many nations and races his guest had seen; for his last experiences had been among the Asiatics. The poet with deepest interest questioned him of the aim and character in its broadest lines of those he had known. As the two talked, one broadened by travel and personal intercourse with many peoples, the other by power of intellect and especially by love of God and of men, differences of race and creed and nationality fell away from the eyes of both, like the calyx from the opening flower. They saw that in the hearts of all men bloomed deathless humanity, making the men of the East at one in all essentials with men in Massachusetts, or anywhere else — that invincible humanity oversweeping all minor differences.

As Whittier relating the conversation to the writer, repeated this testimony, he gave it great weight, as another evidence of the oneness of all human beings, and of that brotherhood which one day is to be realized by us.

He was deeply interested in the poem which he sent Dr. Bowditch, that Eastern poem of Edwin Arnold's, beginning,

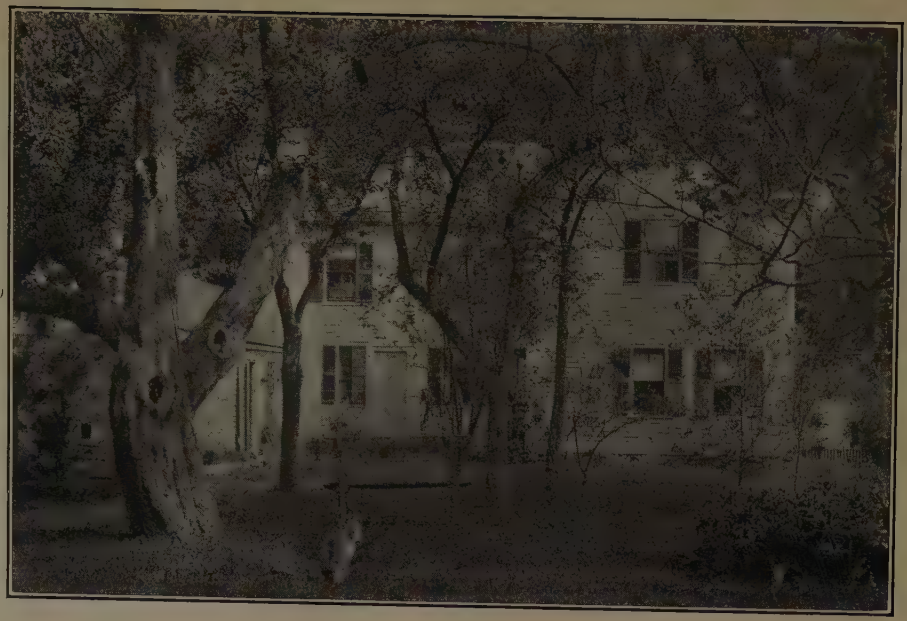
"He who died at Azan sends
This to comfort all his friends,"

to comfort them with the voice of one who having passed beyond this life, finds himself still dwelling in life — not in death.

"When I come to Amesbury," said Whittier in one of his letters, "I shall bring some books for the Library" [the Amesbury Public Library]. He added: "I got a mayflower over three weeks ago from Pennsylvania. I don't suppose the Folly-Mill flowers will bloom for a month or more." The mayflowers in "the woods of Folly-Mill," a few miles from the poet's home, were very abundant and beautiful.

In the old Amesbury burying-ground by the road leading to Merrimac — then called "West Amesbury" — slept his mother and sisters and others of his family. Here he himself was to be laid one day — as now he rests.

He loved the Amesbury house in which his dear ones had lived. Here, with also much of his earlier work, he had written "Snow-bound," "The Tent on the Beach," and many of his later poems. The place was filled with treasured memories and inspiration to further work. There was in it, as the writer has heard



IN THE WHITTIER GARDEN

him say, a dearness and a sacredness belonging to no other spot.

Even in quitting it for a time, as he did at the marriage of his niece, Lizzie — Mrs. Pickard — he did not shut himself out from it. But for this house which was still to be home for him when from time to time he should return there, he chose tenants who, as far as possible, made it so to him — Judge Cate and his wife.

He liked to discuss politics, local and national, with Judge Cate. And all who visited him in Amesbury during these years could but be grateful to Mrs. Cate for her attention to the poet's comfort and pleasure, a thoughtfulness exercised with tact and delicacy. In her consideration of him she might have been a daughter to the lonely saint.

Yet, one day the eyes of a guest of his grew dim as sitting at table with him, there came the keen remembrance of his loneliness. Not one of his own kith and kin was there to minister to him so loyal to them.

Whittier used to say that those born under the shadow of Powow Hill always came back to die. It is well known that this was what he wished to do — to die in the same house from which his mother and his sister had passed to the life beyond.

This wish was not fulfilled.

Yet it was not half a score of miles away, at the beautiful home of a relative and one of his own faith, that he passed from death to life. And it was here, in his own dear house, that his friends assembled to pay him the last honors. And it was from this house that he was borne to

> "...that low green tent
> Whose curtain never outward swings."

Whittier is a wonderful illustration of that faith which in believing possesses.

> "Safe in thy immortality
> What change can reach the wealth I hold?"

he sang of Elizabeth. What thoughts of trust and faith and help he has given to the world! And no man can give, save from what he himself possesses.

Lovers of the poet owe a debt of gratitude to those of his townspeople who are members of the "Whittier Home Association." For they have made of his beloved Amesbury home a memorial of Whittier's life, and have gathered here valued mementos of the poet.

The Association under the guidance of its president, Mrs. Emily B. Smith, able, cultured, full of enthusiasm in her work, a social leader, has made the Whittier Home the gathering-place for whatever can best minister to spiritual power and social refinement. Men and women of distinction are glad to bring here of their work and so to bear witness to their love for the poet.

Here — one of these guests, as speaker at the Midsummer Meeting of the Association — came Calvin Coolidge, the summer before his election as Governor of Massachusetts, and bore testimony to his appreciation of Whittier as poet and man.

Here pilgrims from all parts of the country and from all lands are welcomed. From here they depart with new knowledge of the poet in his own home and greater appreciation of the man whose life of self-sacrificing service prepared him for the utterance of that last message of his — "Love to the world."

In Amesbury also "The Elizabeth H. Whittier Club" keeps alive memory and thoughts of Whittier and of that dear sister of his, his cherished companion, and, like him, a poet.

It is fitting that this club should be also "The Woman's Club" of Amesbury. For Elizabeth Whittier in spite of all her retiring gentleness

was quick to exhibit at need that devotion to the right and that courage of her convictions which must be the guiding influence of the womanhood, the inspirer and companion of manhood in his best achievements.

## XXV

Shortly before the marriage of his niece Lizzie to Mr. Pickard in the April of 1876, Whittier in a letter to Mrs. F—, expressing pleasure at hearing from her and sending her the requested autographs, announced:

"I am not going to give up my residence in Amesbury. But I expect to spend some time with my cousins at their delightful home, Oak Knoll, in Danvers. Lizzie sends love. She is busy with her preparations for a change of base."

Soon after her marriage he said in a letter from Oak Knoll to his old friend, M—— C——:

"I have felt rather lonesome since, but am pretty sure it is all for the best. . . . I went to Boston to the Convention to choose delegates to Cincinnati a week ago yesterday. We elected the men I wanted. The next day I came out here, and found violets and anemones and bloodroot in bloom and the lawn green with grass. Day before yesterday I spent with the Sewalls at Melrose to meet Mrs. Pitman and Mrs. Childs. I had a delightful time. I am now suffering with a cold brought on by the bitter east wind. I long for the southeast ones. M—— P—— [a niece] is quite ill; I fear, seriously. Joseph and Gertrude

Cartland are still at Amesbury, and probably thee will find them there when thee return, which I hope will be ere long."

A letter from Whittier to the writer in the April of 1881 — an extract from which Mr. Pickard published in his biography of the poet — says:

"I have just got thy pleasant letter. I am afraid I cannot answer it very well for I am under the baleful influence of our reluctant and baffling New England spring and my head is in no condition to think. I was at Amesbury nearly a month, most of the time seeing nobody and rather glad of it, as I was overdone with folks at Boston.

"I quite agree with what thee say of 'The Little Pilgrim' and the life beyond generally. But I like 'The Little Pilgrim' story better than Dante's pictures of Heaven — an old man sitting eternally on a high chair and concentric circling saints, martyrs, and ordinary church members whirling around him in perpetual gyration and singing 'glory!' Ah me! It is idle to speculate on these things. All I ask for is to be free from sin and to meet the dear ones again. . . . I am not able to do much — even reading is often painful; but the east winds will soon blow themselves out, and I shall feel better, I trust."

In another letter he says:

"I have just sent a poem to the 'Atlantic' which perhaps nobody will like. But I do and that is enough, as I wrote it to free my mind." The poem was "Rabbi Ishmael."

In 1880 in a letter from Oak Knoll to the writer, he says: "I wonder whether you are enough in the country at Au — to see the progress of spring in grass and bud and blossom. Have you birds about you? Here we have a good many. Last night a pretty rabbit came up under our windows and the gray squirrels are plenty. I have been hoping to get out to see you; but if I cannot, you must come here. Two of our folks are in California this spring."

Of all the birds he speaks in his letters most of the bluebirds, those messengers of spring. In a letter in 1881, he says: "The winter has been rather hard on me and I have suffered from the inability to get out of doors much. I shall be glad to hear the bluebirds." At another time, "The bluebirds are singing in our pines." And again, "The bad weather has made me ill; and I shall not try Boston again until the bluebirds come." Still again, "The weather now looks like spring. A bluebird sang today on our grounds."

In the April of 1884 he wrote from Oak Knoll:

"I hoped to be in Boston at this time but I hardly feel strong enough to go away at present. Somehow the long, dark winter and spring have been rather hard upon me. Today I am rejoicing in the sunshine and hope it has come to stay. Unlike Lowell in his 'Bigelow Papers,' I don't

'. . . like our springs
That kind o' haggle with their greens and things.'

"But I believe other places are no better than New England this season. Letters from Florida, Carolina, and New Jersey all complain of the cheerless weather. Lizzie [his niece] has been for some weeks at Statesville, N. C., but is probably now on her way home. A part of the time the water froze in the pitcher in spite of a fire on the hearth. Then warmer weather with awful thunder-showers and hail stones three inches in diameter and mud so deep that she could not ride out. I shall be at Amesbury most of May, probably."

It is worth while to realize how frail he was, that we may realize better how wonderful was the work he accomplished. Any man might well be thankful that it had been given him to

help to carry through one reform — that of helping to give freedom to the slave.

But Whittier did not stop there. He had been so faithful in one mission that, as reward, another was given to him, in a sense, along the same lines, yet on a spiritual plane. In following the footsteps of his Master, he was still a disciple of freedom. Having known sorrow, he was taught how to comfort; he spoke to souls in prison and led them forth into the clearer air and sunlight. Neither health, nor strength, nor wealth, nor happiness, as the world counts these things, did Whittier require for his work. He leaves without excuse those who shrink from a lesser mission. Yet for them he himself would be the first to find a plea.

In the August of 1879 he wrote: "I am half sick and must try some change. I may go to New Hampshire in a few days if I feel able."

In the June of another year, in a letter from Intervale, he says:

"I came up here hoping to find strength in this region of mountains. But I cannot say that I have succeeded as yet. The Intervale House on the whole I like much better than the house at North Conway village. Mount Washington shows to best advantage here and the

thick pine woods near are a comfort. There are but few people here yet; it has been too cold. The snow lies white on Washington. I expect Joseph and Gertrude Cartland this week. I do not know how long I shall remain here. Lizzie, who is still ill, is at Fryeburg only twelve miles from here."

The pines mentioned in this letter from Intervale were almost adjoining the hotel there — magnificent trees, old enough for the Indians to have loved and left in their beauty. They are the entrance to woods so extensive and so dense that one day the poet, perceiving that a member of his party who had been sitting under a huge pine tree had vanished, came hurrying, breathless, up the slope to give warning not to go into the woods, as there was real danger of being lost in them.

The visit to Intervale to which he refers, and, later, that to Fryeburg, was during the summer of President Garfield's illness. Those who saw the poet then will never forget his indignation and his sorrow over the martyred and suffering hero, nor the depth of his sympanthy which rendered Whittier himself well-nigh ill.

After this time he wrote:

"I was foolish enough to take cold some five weeks ago and have not got over it yet. The

season, so damp, so hot and cold by turns, has been a hard one for invalids, and, added to this, the depressing influence of the good President's suffering and death. I think with thee that the death of the President is uniting the nation. God is overruling all for good. . . . I often think of our visits to the pines at Intervale and our ride up to Dr. Buzzell's hill in Fryeburg."

This drive was through a beautiful country, a portion of the way, however, winding through what must have been a magnificent forest before the fire fiend swept over the giants of the wood and left blackened stumps and great trunks of trees leafless and well-nigh branchless, pointing their blasted tops to the sky like arms uplifted to call down pity and help. But for all these ghosts of former days, the drive in the summer sunshine was a delightful experience, with summer foliage for a good part of the way, with hills at hand and the distant mountains.

The "Joseph and Gertrude" of whom the poet so often speaks in his letters were Mr. and Mrs. Cartland, both his cousins. They had spent the winter preceding his niece's marriage with him in Amesbury. And during the latest years of his life he passed weeks and months at their home in Newburyport. They were frequently, perhaps always in later years, with him in his summerings among the hills. At one time prin-

cipals of the Friends School in Providence, they were delightful in manners and conversation, their culture from books and social life mingling with their Quaker demureness, and, flashing through this, a brightness all their own. It was interesting to watch that likeness in unlikeness between Mr. Cartland and the poet, although, oddly enough, it was the former who recalled the poet, and never the poet him.

Jettie M—— for whom he wrote "The Henchman" and for whom the boat of his poem, "Voyage of the Jettie," was named, was sometimes one of his summer companions among the hills.

## XXVI

Being obliged on account of ill health to decline a visit to old friends, he wrote to them: "I would like to see how Haverhill looks at this delightful season [October] and enjoy with old friends there the wonderful glory of the autumnal woods. But I find that I have to let a great many pleasant things drop out of my life. I thank God for such as remain, and, especially, for the love and goodwill of my friends, among whom I am glad to reckon the inmates of the F—— homestead. With love to thee and the Col. and C——, I include myself in Tiny Tim's benediction, 'God bless us every one!' "

"I went to the country for three or four weeks," he said in 1885 in a letter to the writer, "and came back feeling better for it, but for the last three weeks have fallen back and the first hint of cold weather makes me dread the coming winter and feel that I have little assurance of another season of leaves and flowers. If I live a few weeks longer I shall be seventy-eight!"

It was that same year that he wrote again to his Haverhill friend in regard to the reunion of the surviving students of the Haverhill Academy in 1827–28.

"I thank thee for thy kind invitation," he says, "but I have been so ill for the last week that I am quite unfit for going anywhere. I shall try to be at my old friend Wingate's to-morrow, but I shall not venture to do anything more. It would give me no small pleasure to visit you, but I cannot do it. I hope there will be a very quiet meeting of the old scholars and nothing of a public nature. We don't want to make a show of our old selves in the least. The thing is no plan of mine."

A few years later he wrote to the same:

"My dear friend, Charles Wingate, has passed on peacefully and hopefully. His departure leaves me nearly alone in that old generation."

Mr. Wingate was of the family of "The Countess" of Whittier's beautiful poem.

"I attended the Haverhill reunion," he writes shortly after that event, "but I have suffered for it since; the fatigue and excitement were too much for me."

For this occasion he wrote the poem, "Reunion," ending:

> "Hail and farewell! We go our way
> Where shadows end, we trust, in light;
> The star that ushers in the night
> Is herald also of the day!"

Two years later, in the latter part of July, 1887, the poet wrote from Centre Harbor:

"I got away from the hotel before the fire. We are stopping here at the Sturtevant Farm near Holderness. It has been hot and damp for the last week. The fields are green as June, but too wet for comfort."

Thus, in spite of being "half sick," as he was sometimes — and sometimes wholly so, he had many happy days among the friends who gathered about him in the quiet summer resorts which he frequented as long as he had strength for the journeys. Occasionally, he went to Appledore, one of the most beautiful of the Isles of Shoals. Here the retreat of Mrs. Thaxter's cottage kept him from the crowd. But more often he went to the hills; and this was especially true in his later years.

"I have been ill a good deal of the past month," wrote the poet in the December of 1881, "and in addition I suffer from lameness in my knee. I begin to suspect I am growing old in earnest. . . . I have not been in Boston for nearly a year and have hardly courage to attempt it. Did any of you hear Archdeacon Farrar? He and Phillips Brooks came to see me and I was much pleased with him."

In another letter Whittier says:

"I have been reading with a great deal of satisfaction Phillips Brooks's 'Sermons,' not always agreeing with him, but liking his spirit and earnest convictions. He is a rare man."

More than a year later Whittier wrote:

"I ought long ago to have written thee, but the sickness and death of my brother and my own illness have made my winter here a hard and sad one and compelled me to neglect my correspondence. . . . Lucy Larcom is in the city at Concord Square. I saw her last week. Do you ever come into the city? If so will you not call on me? I have not been about the city at all, but many of my old friends have called on me. What there is to see or hear I do not know. In some respects I might as well be in Amesbury as here. But I hope I am getting somewhat over my fatigue and illness, and am very thankful for it, and for the many blessings of my allotment."

A letter in the March of 1883 regretting missing a friend who had called at the hotel to see him, adds:

"Why didn't thee call here? Anybody comes here who wishes to. If thee are in town again try this place."

"This place" was the Mt. Vernon Street home of former Governor and Mrs. Claflin, where the poet was always so cordially welcomed and so tactfully entertained that he frequently visited there. Mrs. Claflin appreciated the privilege of the presence of the "old saint," as she rightly named the poet, in her home. Her "Personal Recollections" of Whittier give a just estimate of his character and many interesting reminiscences.

"I really think this pleasant day is the beginning of the end of our long winter," wrote the poet from Oak Knoll to the writer in the February of 1887. "I for one am glad to think so. My cousins, Mrs. W——, Miss ——J, and Phebe have been for some weeks in Bermuda where they only complained of too much warmth. They expect to return the latter part of this month. I have been shut in in the cold and snow, but am freer now from pain than I was at the outset of winter. The want of exercise in the open air I feel of course very much.

"I scarcely know what is going on in the literary, political, or theological world. I feel sometimes that I have a word to say that is needed, but I have not felt strong enough to write. So, the world must get on without my shoulder to the wheel, and I guess it will. . . . I wish I

could look in upon you and see you all together as formerly. I am glad to think of you in health, which after all is the main thing."

The poet with his usual thought of giving pleasure enclosed jasmine blossoms from Bermuda in his letter.

A portion of this letter Mr. Pickard quotes in his biography of the poet.

## XXVII

"More than clouds of purple trail
In the gold of setting day;
More than gleams of wing or sail
Beckon from the sea-mist gray.

"Glimpses of immortal youth,
Gleams and glories seen and flown,
Far-heard voices sweet with truth,
Airs from viewless Eden blown, —

"Gentle eyes we closed below,
Tender voices heard once more,
Smile and call us as they go
On and onward still before."

So sings Whittier in "The Vanishers."

Yet while most spiritual, his judgment of spiritualism in its accepted meaning is given in a letter which after the death of his mother he wrote to the dear friend of his sister and himself. She was an ardent spiritualist and, evidently, had been endeavoring to console the poet and his sister through this faith.

"Thy sympathy and tender solicitude have been fully appreciated by us," he wrote of himself and Elizabeth. "But at this time our sorrow can find little alleviation even in the words

of affection and friendship. It must wait for time and trust and Christian faith to do their offices for it.

"Nor do we derive anything of substantial consolation from the spiritual philosophy. For myself I do not feel the need of it to assure me of the continuity of life — that my mother still lives and loves us. All I now ask for is the serene and beautiful child-like trust which has made holy and pleasant the passage of our dear mother. I no longer ask for *sight* — I feel that *faith* is better. But I can only speak for myself. Others may find solace and comfort in what appears to them to be a communication direct and certain with the loved ones who have entered into the new life. . . .

"Our neighbors have been very kind and considerate. We miss thee very much," he goes on to say, "especially these long winter evenings when it is very hard for us to sit alone with our thoughts. Elizabeth seems quite overworn and exhausted; but I hope is slowly gaining — and for myself I have been little better than sick for the last six weeks. But I am very thankful I was able to be with my mother to the last. I find no real consolation in anything short of a prayerful submission to the Divine Providence. . . . Elizabeth sends thee her love and hopes soon to write thee herself."

Shortly after the death of his sister Elizabeth, this same friend was most desirous to give the poet direct evidence that it was possible to communicate with spirits from another world. Such proof was difficult to her sincere nature unable to avail itself of shadowy methods, therefore lacking mediumistic powers.

But one day in the garden room she was making the experiment, the poet listening with the deepest interest. He was of the mind of Mortimer in "Henry the Fourth," who when Glendower boasted to him, "I can call spirits from the vast deep," retorted, "Why, so can I; and so can any man. But will they *come* when you do call for them?" The spiritualist, however, was full of hope, and was beginning to believe that some revelation was to be vouchsafed to her — when, suddenly, she ceased all effort and became her natural self.

"I can do nothing," she announced. "The spirits will not come. An unbeliever is near."

Whittier was not amazed at the reticence of the spirits. All that he wondered at as he told the story was how his companion had devined the approaching footsteps to be — as they proved — those of a strong disbeliever in spiritualism, although a firm believer in spirituality.

Yet everything which held a possibility of

throwing light upon the unknown world had the greatest interest for Whittier.

One evening going to the doctor's house, he found the elders of the family out of town. The poet seated himself for a few moments — possibly not to disappoint the young people who welcomed his coming.

"If you 'll stay, Mr. Whittier," said one of them, "we 'll have 'planchette'." For that magic and impish toy, as it was then considered, was at the time at the zenith of its fame. Today it bears the name of "ouija."

Up sprang the poet and whipped off his overcoat. A table was cleared. Paper, of which planchette required a lavish supply, was brought. And the poet and the only member of the family capable of coaxing anything out of planchette sat down to the witchy little instrument which then as today aroused wondering questions.

It was upon its good behavior that evening and poured forth voluble answers. While in general most unreliable, at times it did seem to have a power of divination. All the autumn of that year a "fire-bug," still at large and undiscovered, had been doing great damage in the neighboring city of Newburyport. That evening planchette, after many aliases, did actually give a name which, later, proved to be that of the criminal. Whittier was vastly entertained with

the whole performance; and — most unusual with him — it was approaching the large hours of the night when he went home.

But as he rose from the table, he revealed the extent of his faith in the powers of the tricksy little toy. Turning to his coadjutor, he said to her:

"If thee can write planchette as well as that, thee can write a book."

But she never did.

The next instant Whittier had gone — after the manner of his flittings.

But he met in a different vein something which seemed to its narrator a hint from the spirit world — a dream which had come to her after the death of her father. In this dream she had seen him standing, a vision of health and beauty, beside the double of himself lying in last agony. He had looked down upon the suffering form as if he himself were no longer one with it; and to emphasize this had thrown a covering over the dead face. This dream had been twice repeated with only slight variations.

Whittier listened with eager interest; and then turning to the narrator, he said impressively:

"That was a good dream. I think that was sent to comfort thee."

The poet would sometimes talk of the relations of those gone to another world to their dear ones still here; and would wonder if the departed knew of sorrow or loss to them — or, still worse, of sin in the earth-bound ones whom they watched. Yet, if this were so, he said, their outlook into the future must be larger than ours, or their faith much greater; and so, they would perceive, or believe, that all would yet be well.

## XXVIII

In memory of the dear ones gone before, Whittier was desirous to buy back the old birthplace in Haverhill. To his friend, Colonel F——, conducting the negotiations for him, he wrote:

"I would leave it to any three competent judges of property in the neighborhood to fix a price, if we could not agree among ourselves."

The purchase, however, fell through on account of the unreasonable price demanded. The owners reckoned upon Whittier's vanity in desiring to get possession of the scene of "Snow-Bound."

But the poet was full of thoughtfulness of what his money should do for others. Long before the possibility of this purchase came to him, he used to say that a great part of the land in the old farm was "only good to help to hold the world together." In his letter desiring to buy the property he stated that the part he wanted was about the poorest part of the farm. "And the house to anybody but myself," he added, "would be only valuable as firewood."

After his death the birthplace was bought by "The Whittier Homestead Association" which has its membership among lovers of Whittier in Haverhill and elsewhere. The care bestowed upon it and the many pilgrims who

journey to it prove the house of greater value to his admirers than to the poet.

If anything in Whittier showed, pre-eminently, the quality of his soul, it was his absolute loyalty. His allegiance once given, he was always true, whether to person or to cause. The friends of his earlier days lost none of their dearness when wide fame and comparative wealth opened the world to him. His old companions seemed to be to him a part of the old family life that he cherished so unremittingly. In life he loved them; and he always carried in his heart the friends who had passed beyond the veil.

"The sudden death of one of my oldest friends, J. T. Fields, was a great shock to me," he wrote. "For forty years we have been very intimate. No man save thy father has ever seemed nearer to me. It is very strange to outlive so many of my dear friends." Of still another he says: "Thus our loved ones pass on. I at least shall soon follow."

His letters are full of thought of those dear to him here or in the world beyond. About three years before his death he said in one of these:

"I have been miserably ill in August and September and have not been able to read or write much. My eyes fail me and I cannot use

them without pain. I have thought a great deal of thy father during my illness. I shall never see a 'beloved physician' like him. When I was in C—— the only visit I made was to the house where he lived," [in former days]. Elsewhere he says again: "Reading Miss Jewett's new book, "A Country Doctor," I could not help thinking of thy dear father. I have never ceased to miss him and have always been thankful that I was permitted to know and love him."

"Don't work too hard, too continuously," he advised a young friend. "I have not been able for years to write more than half an hour at a time because I wrote too steadily long ago. My work, however, is nearly done. I am feeling what old age is more and more, pain, loneliness, and failing powers. But I have no right to complain. For the many blessings which remain I am very grateful, not the least of which is the love of my friends."

Later, he wrote: "I can say but little for myself. The cold, wet season has been hard for me and has made me very sensible that I am old. I have little strength. Everything tires me. After writing a letter or seeing company, I feel exhausted.

"I am here [in Amesbury] at the election, and am glad of the result. I shall probably go back

to Danvers soon. I dread the coming winter. But all will be as God wills and that will be best."

But neither age nor illness made him neglect his vote.

Later, regretting a friend's illness, he says:

"There is so much to be done in this world and so many of us are unable to take our part in the work our hands find to do."

Again, he dreads the winter. "I wait for it in no defiant mood," he says, "I can scarcely imagine that I am the same person who used to welcome it."

A band of colored singers whom the Hampton Institute had trained to delight Northern ears with their music, came to the poet at Oak Knoll, and standing about him with a reverence born of their knowledge of what he had been to their race, they sang to him.

As the poet listened he was filled with remembrances of the days of slavery and the contrast of their present freedom and hope, and wept in gratitude and joy.

Happily, the length and sufferings marking the upward road of the race were concealed from him.

## XXIX

"I go to Amesbury this week," wrote the poet from Oak Knoll in one of his later years, "to attend our Quarterly Meeting there [the Quarterly Meeting of the Friends]. "I have not been very well this spring; but the east winds must be nearly over and I hope I shall feel better."

"I suppose we all need to feel our weakness and dependence upon our Father," he added, in answer to his correspondent, "and that it is well for us to find ourselves walking the Valley of Humiliation; but I like the hills and the sunshine, after all." And the hills and the sunshine of joy were what he liked to lead others to when he could.

With his invincible diffidence as to his own work, he spoke of "My poem in the 'Atlantic,'" deprecating its merit but referring to it as a sad revelation of "the old time."

He had written before in the same strain of another of his poems there.

One day there came to him at Oak Knoll a person who had known him long and well but had recently done something thoughtlessly with which she afterward perceived that he had

reason to be offended. She had come to him resolved to tell him of it, and believing that, since he was so kind, this would not be hard to do.

But it was hard; and as after the greeting she sat listening and saying little, the sense of her own mistake grew upon her. How could she bear it if he should lose confidence, even in her judgment?

"There is something I have done in regard to you, Mr. Whittier," she began at last —— "and I'm afraid you'll be angry with me," she added with a new fearfulness.

Instantly, he turned his face from the fire into which he had been gazing and looked at her. He read all her fears. His whole face softened. His flashing eyes met hers.

"I shall not be angry long," he answered; and was silent, waiting.

But the glance, the perfect assurance of the tone were more than comfort; they were comprehension and the glad evidence of a trust too firm to be lightly overthrown. And as she told her story, freely now, it turned out that he had known it, and in a moment by his tact and judgment had righted everything she had feared that she had tangled.

"I have been unable to write for some weeks except at rare intervals, as my eyes are failing

me, and my general health and strength are so diminished," he wrote from Amesbury in the May of 1889. "I never expect to write again except an occasional note in private correspondence. The mental effort of dictation which I have tried is too hard for me. Phebe [the adopted daughter of his cousin, Mrs. Woodman at Oak Knoll] has tried to be my amanuensis, but to little purpose. I can only read for a few minutes without pain. I should not venture to engage to write anything for the public. My work is over — I can do no more, but must silently wait for the end which cannot be far off. Letter after letter meanwhile comes to me which I cannot answer, and people come to see me whom I cannot talk with."

Yet he rallied his strength. For it was after this letter that the last beautiful message of his poems — "At Sundown" — printed and not published at that time, was sent out by him in greeting to his friends.

Whatever his weakness and weariness of body, his prayer,

"Let my last days be my best,"

was answered. For the soul in him was that

shining "light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

After his recovery from "grippe" with which he had been dangerously ill, the writer held a long conversation with him at the home of his cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Cartland of Newburyport.

In this conversation he seemed in clearness of vision, wideness of range, strength and grasp of subject, and especially in a certain energy, to carry her back to his days of comparative bodily vigor. All that his soul had had or held, it had and held more firmly than ever, and it had gained that higher outlook spread before the eyes of him whose feet are upon the mountains.

Not only did Whittier believe in immortality, but his very presence helped others to believe in it.

## XXX

"And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day,"

sang the poet when through time and trial somewhat of the rest of eternity had come to him and in the beginning of age — that youth of immortality — he could say:

"...all the jarring notes of life
Seem blending in a psalm."

With all the elements so mixed in him — pride, power, ambition, indignation against wrong, intense love of liberty, keenness in character-reading, political acumen, delight in beauty, with humor illuminating all it lighted upon — and not inclined to overlook anything — we find in many-sided Whittier nothing more strongly marked than praise of all things good, which flows inevitably into worship of the Giver. For simplicity is not at all one idea; it is one purpose.

"I am a Quaker because my family before me — those whom I loved — were Quakers," he said one day to his guest who had accompanied him to the Friends' meeting and on

returning sat in the garden room listening to his comments. "And also I am one because the faith pleases me," he continued. "I believe in it."

In the May of 1886, only six years before his death, the poet wrote:

"I hope thee are able to enjoy this beautiful springtime better than I can. I have been laid up with a cold for the last fortnight, and I have reached an age when I cannot afford to take cold at all. I hope to be able to go to Amesbury in season for Quarterly Meeting which I have never missed."

He had never missed the Quarterly Meeting of the Friends — he at almost forescore and having always been so delicate in health!

It was wonderful that Whittier with his delicate health, his many illnesses, his extreme sensitiveness, even to the winds of heaven when they did not blow from the right quarter, should have fought through and helped to win a great battle for the freedom of millions of human beings.

Still more wonderful was it that he should have lived for almost a generation after this was won, to enjoy the fruits of his victory and of his genius. In 1883 he said in a letter:

"Many years ago a Boston doctor of eminence told me that I had disease of the heart. But if that had been so, I should not have been alive now."

More than the absence of positive disease, however, upheld his strength. It was that constant renewal of vital force which comes from living in the Spirit, united with that same wise judgment in the management of his frail body that marked his course in all matters.

He voices this renewal of vitality when in "Our Master," he says:

> "We touch him in life's throng and press,
> And we are whole again."

They who have seen Whittier suddenly arrested in speech and action stand motionless with bent head and listening soul, and then for a moment uplift his face, his eyes glowing with inspiration, as if his own soul were sending back a message to the skies, can never doubt that there were moments when in the language of the prophets whom he loved, "an angel spake to him."

Or was it that the heart of the Father Himself — the "Over-Heart," as the poet has it — called to his heart?

Later, the poet would speak the message he had received. But the fullness, the joy of it no man could utter — unless he spoke in the tongue of Heaven.

It was in the garden room where the eyes of one who sat by in reverence had seen this bowed head, this look listening and rapt, this flashing upward glance responsive with joy and power, that the poet sat discoursing of many things of life and thought. In speaking of a creed — belief in the hard and fast-bound fate of all who did not reach what human beings considered the standard of faith — he said:

"If people really believed all the things that they think they believe concerning God and the future judgment of the lost, there would be no more smiling in the world."

Yet no one could be farther from underestimating the danger of slighting human responsibility than was Whittier. His oft-repeated saying, "The Lord will do the best He can for us," to Whittier always carried with it the certainty that God would respect man's choice. It was linked with the poet's assertions, "It's better not to risk behaving in this world as if there were no other;" and, "We ought to do the best we can in this world."

The intensity of this conviction he utters in

his "Tent on the Beach," where he speaks of taking in the crowded sail and letting his conscience steer — the conscience, not of a bigot, but of a saint.

Poet, philanthropist, saint, as he was — and not scientist — no man comes closer to that supreme science which is perception of the highest truths. That the love of the Father is unalterable, and the free choice of man inalienable, brings to his mind all the possibilities of endless sinning and suffering, side by side with the mercy that endures forever. In its vivid portrayal of Divine love rejected, his poem, "The Answer," is one of the most remarkable religious poems of the language. In it he sings:

"No force divine can love compel.

"No word of doom may shut thee out,
No wind of wrath may downward whirl,
No swords of fire keep watch about
The open gates of pearl;

"A tenderer light than moon or sun,
Than song of earth a sweeter hymn,
May shine and sound forever on,
And thou be deaf and dim.

"For ever round the Mercy-seat
The guiding lights of Love shall burn;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn?"

In such mood one day in the garden room the talk led up to the story of Lazarus and Dives, to the selfish luxury in which the latter had lived, his hard-heartedness, his terrible punishment, and in Hades his cry for mercy, if not for himself, yet for his brothers. After uttering many things of deepest interest, the poet sat silent with head bent and eyes upon the flower flame which he loved so well, and which in some way seemed to inspire him. Suddenly, he turned upon his hearer, his eyes kindled into splendor by the glow of his thought which flashed upon him and burst into instant speech.

"He would not stay there long," he said of Dives; "he had begun to think of his brothers!"

Two visitors came to the poet's house one day and while waiting for him to appear, one of them picked up the poem, "The Eternal Goodness," then just published, and reading it aloud remarked, "Whittier could not have written that thirty years ago."

It was true. As Whittier's feet had climbed the steeps of self-sacrifice, the horizon of the Eternal

had ever widened before his eyes. Many men has he trained in faith and leadership.

For while men's minds struggled with questions as to the mind and methods of God, Whittier from the Spirit within him sang of the heart of God. Neither mete nor bound of creed could hold him whose communion was with the Spirit itself. His last message — "Love to all the world," was the seal of those years of spiritual communion with Him who came to save the world.

In recalling those inspired poems, "The Eternal Goodness," and "Our Master," the remark he made one day to the writer becomes of especial interest.

"I asked Emerson," said Whittier, as he sat talking beside the flower-filled hearth in the garden room, "doesn't thee believe that Christ was more than other men — than mere human?" "Yes," Emerson answered. "Then I said to him," continued Whittier, "If thee does, thee ought to confess it in thy writings."

"His eye was beauty's powerless slave,"

Whittier most truly sings of himself.

For never a fair and beautiful thing of earth in his pathway was unseen by him; and never one did he pass by, save at the command which

led him to higher beauty. No indifference or coldness, no lack of fervor or of sympathy marred his high nature. His poems are full of belief in the immanence of the Spirit that to him was no vague and distant Effulgence, but a present Companion.

This vision of Reality through the mists which clothe the seeming real was so vivid that to him every mountain was a possible Mount of Transfiguration needing but the revelation of the One always present to show forth its splendor.

Whittier is inspirer in patriotism, in honor, in holiness; comforter in distress and sorrow. To those who believe in the sacredness of a righteous cause, who hold their country's honor high; to those who would listen to the voice of Nature in her true and deepest moods; to those who love

"All sweet accords of hearts and homes;"

— and more — to those who mourn their dead, or who sorrow over sins and seek the promise of the Father's love — to all these when life's strain is greatest Whittier declares that Reality which the soul craves.

In the sins, distresses, and sorrows overwhelming the world today, Whittier's life and

work stand forth filled with the strength builded upon Eternity. With inspiration he sings to the word:

"All which is real now remaineth,
And fadeth never;
The Hand which upholds it now sustaineth
The soul forever."

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